



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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# Summary Records of the Proceedings of the 143rd IPU Assembly

Madrid, Spain

26-30 November 2021

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## Introduction

Delegations from 117 Member Parliaments took part in the work of the Assembly:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The following six Associate Members also took part in the Assembly: the Arab Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), the Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC), and the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (APF).

Observers included representatives of:

(i) the United Nations and related organizations: Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH);

(ii) parliamentary assemblies and associations: African Parliamentary Union (APU), Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU), Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR), G5 Sahel Inter-Parliamentary Committee, Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (PNND), Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TurkPA), Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia, Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PF-SALW), Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States (PUIC), Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF);

(iii) worldwide non-governmental organizations: the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria;

(iv) international political party federations: Socialist International;

(v) other IPU partner organizations: International IDEA, the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Of the 936 delegates who attended the Assembly, 515 were members of parliament (509 from Member Parliaments and 6 from Associate Member delegations). Those parliamentarians included 39 Presiding Officers, 31 Deputy Presiding Officers, 200 women MPs (38.8%) and 128 young MPs (24.9%).

# Inaugural ceremony of the 143rd Assembly

FRIDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2021

*The inaugural ceremony of the 143rd IPU Assembly took place at the IFEMA Palacio Municipal, Madrid at 18:30 on Friday, 26 November 2021, with His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain in attendance.*

**Ms. Isabel Diaz Ayuso** (President of the Community of Madrid) welcomed delegates to Madrid and noted that the IFEMA conference centre, the venue of the Assembly, had been the site of the city's first temporary hospital to deal with COVID-19 cases in March 2020. Spain had a long tradition of parliamentary democracy, going back to the *Cortes de León* in 1188. Spain's modern democratic era had begun in 1978 and the monarchy, represented today by King Felipe VI, was key to the country's stability.

She thanked the IPU for choosing Madrid for its Assembly and wished delegates well in their essential work to spread peace and understanding. Parliaments existed for the common good, to protect the people against abuses of power, to engage in dialogue to overcome difficulties and to ensure peaceful coexistence. The citizens of the world were counting on the delegates at the Assembly to cooperate and find consensus in the interests of democracy and freedom. She hoped that delegates would also have the opportunity to explore Madrid during their stay.

**Mr. Abdulla Shahid** (President of the United Nations General Assembly), in a pre-recorded video message, spoke of his time as a parliamentarian and the important role played by parliaments in bringing United Nations agreements to fruition. The Assembly was an opportunity to build on the declaration adopted at the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Vienna in September 2021 to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, build resilience and reinforce a shared commitment to the rule of law, sustainability, democracy and human rights.

**Mr. António Guterres** (Secretary-General of the United Nations), in a pre-recorded video message emphasized the vital role of parliaments in addressing the many serious challenges the world was facing: the climate emergency, inequality and continued conflict around the globe. His recent report, *Our Common Agenda*, stressed the importance of building a more inclusive form of multilateralism, bringing together parliaments, civil society, the private sector and others for global decision-making. Discussions at the Assembly on gender equality, public engagement and the promotion of interfaith dialogue were all essential considerations in promoting peaceful and resilient communities and societies.

*Members of the Spanish National Ballet performed a traditional flamenco dance.*

**Mr. Ander Gil García** (President of the Senate of Spain) welcomed delegates on behalf of the *Cortes Generales* and noted that parliamentarians were united by the current challenges facing the world. Parliamentarians needed to lead by example, promote goodwill and respect, and overcome their differences through dialogue, in order to strengthen the confidence of their citizens in democratic systems. Inequalities between rural and urban areas, and the separation between central decision-makers and the periphery, were issues that needed to be addressed in many countries.

Violence and abuse against women in parliaments remained disturbingly commonplace, with male parliamentarians often the main perpetrators. Parliaments needed to work to ensure that their chambers were safe and respectful places, with true gender equality and free of all violence. Parliaments needed to represent their citizens and preserve democratic values. The IPU Strategy for 2022-2026, due to be adopted later that week, set out a range of strategic objectives and policy areas, which would guide the Organization's activities and encourage parliaments to work together over the coming five years to strengthen their impact.

**Ms. Meritxell Batet Lamaña** (President of the Congress of Deputies of Spain) welcomed delegates to Madrid in the name of the Congress of Deputies. The 143rd Assembly was the fourth held in Madrid and marked a return to face-to-face meetings after nearly two years of living with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spanish parliament acknowledged its special responsibility to ensure that the Assembly would take place in the safest conditions possible. The COVID-19 virus was now held in check in many countries but a huge task still lay ahead, particularly in ensuring full access to vaccines everywhere and for everyone.

The pandemic had been a great challenge for parliaments, as it had imposed new working methods, often relying on new technologies, and required parliaments to formulate and approve emergency responses in a continuously evolving situation. The crisis had created a great deal of mistrust, putting democracy at risk. Parliaments had therefore needed to be consistent, united and open to radical solutions. People's dissatisfaction with politics had led to polarization, exclusion and populism in many countries, undermining democratic institutions. The theme of the Assembly, *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*, was therefore most timely. The world would be looking to the debates and outcome of the Assembly to provide hope for the future of democracy.

**Mr. Duarte Pacheco** (President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union) thanked the Spanish Parliament for having agreed to host the Assembly and for its organization in a much shorter timeframe than usual. Since the last in-person Assembly in Belgrade in October 2019, the IPU had been able to continue its work thanks to remote meetings, but in-person interactions were vital for true parliamentary diplomacy. The COVID-19 pandemic had shown how interdependent the world had become and how it was necessary to work together to find global solutions to global problems. More than 5 million people had lost their lives to the virus, including many parliamentarians, and the pandemic had led to backsliding in hard-won progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The past two years had also been marked by dangerous regressions in democracy and human rights, with an epidemic of military coups and direct attacks on parliaments, notably in Afghanistan, Guinea, Mali, Myanmar and Sudan. Parliaments had a responsibility to build back better and bolder. The Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament had conveyed a strong message that business as usual was not an option. More needed to be done to combat the climate crisis, effectively and with accountability. The pandemic had disproportionately affected women and youth, and it was crucial to ensure that they were represented in all aspects of society and decision-making, including in parliaments. Technology allowed people to be better connected than ever before but had also enabled a huge rise in extremism, polarization and disinformation. Parliamentarians had a duty to listen to one another, to promote cooperation and trust through a message of hope not hate, and to safeguard democracy.

**His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain** welcomed delegates and expressed his condolences for the huge loss of life worldwide over the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Spain was proud to have been chosen to host the Assembly and was taking every step to ensure that it took place in the safest possible conditions. UNESCO had recognized Spain as the cradle of parliamentarianism, with the *Cortes de León* of 1188 considered the first documented parliamentary system in Europe. Dialogue between countries and institutions was the basis for agreements and cooperation. The IPU had been founded on the conviction of Sir William Randal Cremer and Frédéric Passy that parliaments needed to face global challenges together.

The focus of the Assembly's General Debate on threats to parliaments and democracy was very much in line with the intentions of the IPU's founders. In the days ahead, parliamentarians would need to work hard to reconcile their different perspectives and build a consensus on the way forward. Parliaments had many shared challenges, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate emergency. Parliaments had a responsibility to draw on the talents and skills of all sectors of society, and improving the representation of women and young people was vital.

He extended a particular welcome to parliaments from Latin America, with whom Spain shared a historical cultural bond, as well as to fellow parliaments around the Mediterranean and in other European Union states. It was a particular honour for Spain to host the first IPU Assembly held in the European Union in over 20 years. He welcomed members of parliament from around the world and expressed his conviction that their interest and vigour in the deliberations to come would yield a fruitful outcome. He thanked the Spanish National Ballet for the flamenco performance and encouraged delegates to partake in the many other cultural and leisure activities that Madrid had to offer.

*His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain declared the 143rd IPU Assembly open.*

## Sitting of Saturday 27 November

### (Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 11:45, with Ms. M. Batet Lamaña (Spain), President of the Assembly, in the Chair.*

**The President**, welcoming participants to Spain, said in her opening remarks to the Assembly, and with reference to the upcoming General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building democracy*, that the new challenges and threats to democracy, to its key institution of parliament and to its founding principles, such as pluralism, political representation, open debate, and majority or consensus decision-making, came no longer from without but within. Promoting political integration and social cohesion, the parliamentary democracies now present in most countries were a uniting force underpinned, in addition to those principles, by a consensus on shared values and common goals, and by openness to alternative views – views that could well shift from minority to majority status in future. Political discourse, however, had become confrontational, narrow-minded and too often aimed at delegitimizing, if not destroying, the opponent.

The result was to alienate the public, fuelling the populism and polarization that so imperilled democracy at a time when political integration, harmony and stability were, paradoxically, ever more needed to deal with such critical issues as the climate emergency, human rights and freedoms, inequality and migration. Similarly needed was trust in democratic institutions, which could best respond to such issues in a socially inclusive and cohesive environment that promised safety, freedom and prosperity. For their part, parliaments must counter the challenges to democracy by working with commitment and solidarity, in partnership with civil society, to build agreement and consensus while always recognizing the legitimacy of alternative standpoints. Consensus must furthermore have a scientific and legal basis to be effective in foiling populist attempts to disseminate fake news and misinformation. Any weakening of public institutions would strengthen non-democratic powers at the expense of democratic power.

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that he looked forward to hearing differing views, and above all young voices, in a constructive and respectful General Debate among parliamentarians seeking to learn from the experiences and practices of others in an active search for solutions, with a focus on what they could and should contribute towards strengthening democracy to prevent its decline. With that in mind, four key topics for discussion in the debate were: new approaches to politics as part of a concerted effort to address challenges through increased cooperation and dialogue; legislative and policy measures to counter disinformation and hate speech, including investment in media literacy and civic education; action to reduce polarization and hostility; and ways to connect people with their democratic institutions through meaningful engagement in inclusive and participatory decision-making processes. In that regard, the composition of parliaments should also reflect the percentages of women and youth in society. As believers in and defenders of democracy, parliamentarians should have no fear in broaching and finding solutions to those issues.

**Mr. D. Türk** (President of the World Leadership Alliance – Club de Madrid), special guest, said by way of introduction that he had closely cooperated with the IPU in his former capacities as Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs at the United Nations and former President of Slovenia. The organization over which he currently presided comprised 120 former presidents and prime ministers who collaborated in making recommendations and suggestions for promoting democracy as a platform of fundamental importance to finding global solutions to global problems through multilateral cooperation. The Club de Madrid appreciated with cautious optimism the resilience of democracy – and in particular its capacity to develop and self-correct as necessary – but also understood the danger of complacency especially in challenging times. As the IPU was well aware, inclusive dialogue and accumulated experience in the range of situations that presented themselves were vital.

A value in itself, democracy was tested daily on its capacity to deliver in facing those situations, which included rising authoritarian tendencies and coups d'état; an emergent information ecosystem with no adequate normative framework in place for its management; growing income disparity and inequality that drove social discontent and division; and increased political polarization fuelled by, among others, nationalism, hate speech and fake news. Democracy nonetheless remained the best hope for solutions balanced between stability and freedom.



Against that backdrop and in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Club de Madrid had established its Global Commission on Democracy and Emergencies, which had as a member the IPU Secretary General who had provided valuable input to its work throughout 2021. In its impending report on that work, the Commission was set to make key recommendations relating to three cornerstones of democratic resilience: the mechanisms of democracy and fundamental rights; social inclusion; and effective leadership and democratic culture. The recommendations had been formulated on the basis of ideas around the need to develop a sufficiently robust and legally defined institutional framework, remove the seeds of authoritarianism, avoid surrender to politics of polarization, and ensure human rights protection.

Parliaments had demonstrated their central role during the COVID-19 emergency through their adaptability and positive examples of increased efficiency, transparency, inclusion and innovation. The Commission recommended that they now focus on: reviewing legal and constitutional frameworks for emergencies; establishing frameworks of that nature that were clear, accessible and publicly available in advance; preparing for future emergencies and ensuring robust parliamentary oversight of related government action; embedding digital technologies to enable the continuation of parliamentary work during times of emergency; developing a new information ecosystem that served the public interest; exploring new mechanisms of participation; pursuing the achievement of a participatory democracy and inclusive representation; and looking into new mechanisms for youth engagement. The 143rd Assembly was a great opportunity for parliamentarians to engage in an in-depth discussion of the pandemic experience and draw lessons for the future. He looked forward to further cooperation between the World Leadership Alliance and the IPU.

**Ms. L. Vasylenko** (Ukraine), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, in informing the General Debate from a gender perspective, said that increased social polarization bred mistrust in political institutions and a culture of hate and intolerance. The problem of hate too often directed at women and other groups pushing the status quo had been exacerbated by the ubiquity and anonymity of online and social media platforms. Such forms of violence were, moreover, detrimental to the whole of society.

Democracies must be urgently strengthened to build more equal and united communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic by recognizing women's valuable role in trust-building. In addition to creating cross-party cooperation around issues that all could support, women's parliamentary caucuses helped to defend women's legislative priorities, build capacities among women parliamentarians, and promote gender-mainstreaming in parliament. As another key step in overcoming challenges to democracy, the goal of women's equal representation must be pursued by increasing their numbers overall and in leadership roles in parliament and tearing down the barriers to their political participation, including gender-based discrimination, sexism, harassment and violence. Gender-balanced parliaments translated into gender-responsive policies driving long-term growth, sustainability, empowerment, health, and education for all.

**Ms. S. Albazar** (Egypt), President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, speaking via video link, in presenting the youth perspective on the coming debate, said that young people had been particularly affected by the impact of the pandemic and potentially deprived of their inherent right to lead the way to a resilient, prosperous and just future. Young parliamentarians would continue to make their voices heard at IPU events, including the current Assembly, and to emphasize the need to increase youth participation in the democratic process. Despite measures by parliaments to increase youth involvement and better integrate youth perspectives into their work, more remained to be done to ensure the rightful place of young people in politics.

Supported by changemakers around the globe, the IPU's *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign continued to inspire transformative action by parliaments to become the more resilient, inclusive and youth-responsive institutions needed to drive the evolution of democracy in a changing world. Youth distrust in politics led to marginalization, disengagement and polarization, whereas youth engagement in politics would have the opposite effect of narrowing the intergenerational divide, from which democracy would benefit by growing stronger and more resilient.



Item 3 of the agenda**General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy:  
Overcoming division and building community***  
(A/143/3-Inf.1 and Inf.2)

**Ms. S. Gafarova** (Azerbaijan), opening the high-level segment of the debate reserved for Speakers of Parliament, said that existing problems, even in established democracies, had been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and worsening economic conditions, leading to further polarization and disbelief in political systems, with the line between freedom of expression and disinformation increasingly blurred. Parliaments must consolidate their central role in working to overcome divides and build social bridges, taking a broad perspective and a whole-of-society approach in, among others, their legislative efforts to strengthen that freedom and eliminate disinformation and its dangerous consequences. Drawing on lessons learned from its unpreparedness to respond swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global community – including parliamentarians – must give more focus to the recovery phase to better equip it to address future challenges. To that end, her country had proposed the establishment of a United Nations high-level panel tasked with preparing recommendations on appropriate measures.

Peace and security were key factors for democracy, human rights protection and sustainable development. Following the liberation of its internationally recognized territories from Armenian occupation, Azerbaijan had initiated large-scale restoration programmes in those territories to facilitate the return of internally displaced persons. Since the end of its conflict with Armenia, in 2020, it had repeatedly shown its readiness to normalize relations through a peace agreement currently being negotiated for signing. Lastly, as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, Azerbaijan had proposed an initiative for expanding and deepening the Movement's parliamentary dimension, which would serve the global efforts to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development.

**Ms. N.B.K. Mutti** (Zambia) said that the democratic backsliding seen over the past decade must be urgently addressed. Major causative factors included political polarization, which sometimes gave rise to such enmity that autocratically minded leaders felt justified in their abuse of democratic norms to restrain opponents. Another factor was the rise in populism, argued by proponents to offer the promise of democratic renewal through new political actors and policies, whereas in truth it diminished the quality of democracy and led to curtailment of civil liberties. As to the factor of proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs), including social media, it promised to create an informed society but had undermined democracy by promoting disinformation that in turn fragmented discourse among citizens and policymakers. Moreover, cyberbullying and online hate speech left some groups, notably women, unable to participate in democratic processes.

Deeper democratization was also hampered by lack of integrity in electoral processes, while failure to punish electoral malpractice eroded public confidence and could spark post-electoral violence and social disunity. Social unrest, political instability and democratic breakdown were likewise potential outcomes of climate change effects on food supply and pricing, especially in fragile and emerging democracies with weak institutions. As a key stakeholder, parliaments must address such challenges by providing a robust legal framework for promoting democracy, national unity and good governance. They must also strengthen their oversight mechanisms to ensure that all social groups were catered to through transparent and equitable policymaking so as to forge an enabling environment for democracy, peace and community-building.

**Mr. I. Dacic** (Serbia) said that, in young and long-standing democracies alike, authoritarian tendencies, human rights violations, institutional weakening and rising populism pointed to a decline in respect for democratic values. Democratic institutions, however, were the only option with the legitimacy and transparency needed to ward off influences said to undermine the strength of democracies. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, his country had been criticized by others for having introduced restrictions on movement that they themselves had subsequently introduced after recognizing that human life could not otherwise be protected. That example demonstrated that the current state of democracy must be addressed rationally and in context, as opposed to in theory. Democracy was a value system that changed and adapted to real life and needs while always continuing to represent the democratically expressed will of citizens.

The pandemic crisis notwithstanding, Serbia continued to preserve its democracy through transparent and participatory decision-making in strict compliance with its constitutional and international obligations. The full involvement of all stakeholders in such processes was the only way to restore public trust in institutions and reaffirm the fundamental principles of democracy, including representativeness and electoral participation. Constant strengthening of democratic institutions was among the answers to current dilemmas, which were unlikely to be served by social media discussions or by apolitical or anti-political movements. The role of all such institutions – including parliaments as the mainstay and greatest protector of democracy – in effectively thwarting all undemocratic tendencies must be robustly promoted.

**Mr. M. Al-Ghanim** (Kuwait) said that, in addition to the political, the discussion involved conceptual and cultural considerations and should be more centred on overcoming challenges to the essence and philosophy of the democratic system than on challenges to its formalities. To tackle issues around a matter as sensitive and sacrosanct as democracy required courage and objectivity. Deification of the system was the first obstacle to renewing democracy and addressing its possible shortcomings. There should be no fear in pointing out instances of where democracy was exercised erroneously; democracy was a means, not an end, and a practice, not a slogan. No one should become enslaved to a political or legal totem, even one labelled democratic.

Although regarded as better than the alternatives, democracy was not so sacred that its practices could not legitimately be questioned and remedied if flawed. Examples of what could happen in the shadow of democracy were countless: conspicuous societal rifts resulting from polarization; devastating repercussions of war; racial, sectarian and other conflicts triggered by social media and disinformation campaigns; trampling of the rights of others by the majority; and abuse of constitutional powers to create discord, with consequences for development. As an important step towards protecting and preventing a retreat from democracy, the current debate should be constantly pursued by the IPU in workshops, talks and seminars involving all geopolitical groups. The Kuwaiti Parliament stood ready to host an expert seminar to explore ways of dealing with the structural imbalances in the democratic system and reviving its effectiveness.

**Mr. A.C. Bundu** (Sierra Leone) said that parliaments were capable of overcoming the complex and multiple challenges to democracy if given the space to engage with civil society, as in his country, where polarization had been addressed in that manner. The law criminalizing libel had been repealed and the death penalty had been abolished, while more recently a new law on cybersecurity had entered into force. Following a state of emergency declared over rape and sexual assault, the relevant legislation had been amended to impose life imprisonment for certain sexual offences against women. Steps had also been taken to promote civic education and public participation in governance. Those examples clearly illustrated how the will to engage civil society could contribute to overcoming divisions and building communities. As an expression of the inclusivity of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, the Speaker invited a member of the opposition and a young MP to share his speaking time.

**A representative from Sierra Leone**, speaking as a member of his country's opposition, said that women in Sierra Leone were consistently encouraged to participate in public life, as evidenced by the appointment of women to some of the highest legal offices. There was a strong parliamentary women's caucus, and a bill aimed at bringing more women into politics was under consideration. The creation of a ministry dealing with gender issues was another instance of the efforts to promote women's emancipation and provide women with the political space that they deserved, objectives that would surely be achieved with time.

**A representative from Sierra Leone** said that, in his country, young people like himself were supported to participate in governance and assist in promoting peace and democracy, including through the efforts of a national youth commission, which organized technical and administrative training and voluntary placements for young people.

**Mr. P. Katjavivi** (Namibia) said that democracy was a vital precondition for sustainable development and for building inclusive societies, yet divisions based on wealth, access to education, health care and employment remained common, along with the marginalization of certain groups. His country was well aware of the dangers of polarization, having regained freedom from one of its severest-ever State-sanctioned forms, namely apartheid. It had since established democratic electoral processes and institutions of State but nonetheless faced challenges shared

by others, such as inequality, low voter turnout, youth disaffection, and increasing violence against women and children. In addition to taking measures to build accountability and transparency, parliaments must intensify their efforts to be accessible and deliver services in more innovative ways to combat the constant flow of unverified information, particularly on social media, which were harmful to societies and undermined institutional credibility. The Namibian Parliament was developing its website to provide more current information and allow online petitions.

In the critical task of protecting and enhancing participatory democracy, the representation of women and youth was imperative. In Namibia, women accounted for 44 per cent of parliamentarians, but only 8 per cent of parliamentarians were under 30 years of age, although efforts were under way to improve that percentage. They included, however, Africa's youngest sitting parliamentarian, a 22-year-old woman and member of his delegation. On another note, it was important to continue speaking out against vaccine nationalism and for the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to ensure that countries in the global South were not left behind.

**Mr. R. Talbi El Alami** (Morocco) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had deepened social disparities across the board, exacerbating existing challenges to representative democracy, which included flourishing populism and sovereign tendencies. Feelings of injustice, marginalization and exclusion, especially among groups in the south, had become even further entrenched by the lack of international solidarity displayed during the pandemic – a lack confirmed in Africa by its low vaccination rates. Without representative democracy, the world as known would not have been. In the pandemic context, for instance, parliaments had been relied upon to pass appropriate legislation, protect rights and freedoms, approve budgets and authorize spending. Always embodying that form of democracy that some now saw – and perhaps justifiably so – as waning, parliaments must remain committed to giving it new impetus as the main bulwark against chaos.

To promote the renewal of institutional democracy, parliaments should focus, in addition to their legislative and oversight functions, on evaluating the impact of public policies, strengthening parliamentary democracy, and stepping up interaction with citizens to identify and reflect their concerns. Political parties should foster stability by bolstering their mediating role and should also join in managing public affairs. It was similarly important to consolidate participatory democracy and the role of civil society in, among other things, proposing legislation and petitioning public authorities. New ICTs should furthermore be deployed to encourage constructive public debate and disseminate the values of democracy, pluralism, moderation and openness. Lastly, parliaments should work to underpin the values of participation and democracy, alongside the family, media, schools, universities and public institutions.

*The sitting rose at 13:30.*

## Sitting of Saturday 27 November

### (Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 15:00, with Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), Vice-President of the Assembly, in the Chair.*

#### Item 3 of the agenda (continued)

#### **General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community***

**Ms. T.K. Narbaeva** (Uzbekistan) said that Uzbekistan was building a new society based on democratic principles and the creation of opportunities for the population. The COVID-19 pandemic had impacted everyone in the world and had set back progress with regard to gender equality. Promoting women's equality and strengthening their role in society and in political life was crucial. Gender-based violence occurred everywhere, in all walks of society, including within parliaments. Uzbekistan was taking measures to promote gender equality and boost women's participation in politics. Progress had been made in reaching parity in political party membership, higher education and entrepreneurship. Women's participation had increased in innovation and engineering. Uzbekistan was also due to host the World Conference of Women Speakers of Parliament in 2022, which would afford an invaluable opportunity to share experiences and best practices on promoting gender equality and rights and opportunities for women. Efforts were also being made in Uzbekistan to promote understanding and tolerance between people of different nationalities and faiths. Parliaments must lead by example in that regard. Young people's participation in political life was crucial. The IPU's campaign *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* was particularly welcome. The adoption, by the United Nations Human Rights Council, of a resolution on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people was a clear message on the importance of protecting the rights of young people.

**Ms. A.A. Among** (Uganda) said that public engagement was essential to address contemporary challenges to democracy. To build trust in political systems, parliaments must represent the public and address public needs. To that end, in Uganda, measures had been taken to enhance public access to information and participation in parliamentary business by livestreaming debates and allowing the public to propose amendments to bills online at committee stage. Efforts had been made to boost Parliament's visibility on social media, increase public access to parliamentary activity, in particular for young people, and broaden opportunities for advocacy and awareness-raising, as well as for receiving public feedback. Parliament's use of social media could help counter the flow of disinformation which eroded democratic values, spread discontent and diminished public trust in political institutions. Measures had also been taken to engage with local councils to promote equitable development between districts and reduce imbalances. Legislation had been enacted to solidify the political party system and strengthen trust in electoral processes. To engage the public in decision-making and foster trust in democratic systems, awareness-raising and outreach activities should be undertaken. A robust and well-functioning justice system was essential. Development and economic empowerment for the public were crucial; poverty constituted a long-standing threat to democracy.

**Ms. P. Maharani** (Indonesia), *Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair.*

**Ms. C. Widegren** (Sweden) said that democracy was under threat and society was more polarized than ever before. Parliamentarians must take up the fight to protect democracy by ensuring that their constituents felt heard and supported. Trust was the foundation of stable and democratic societies, and only through dialogue and mutual respect could threats to society be overcome. Democracy could not exist in a vacuum; it required a context of transparency and rule of law. The risk of corruption was, to some degree, a threat in all countries. If institutions were opaque and corrupt, democracy could not succeed. Corruption was complex and prevalent. It was not simply a question of financial exchanges, but also exchanges of services and abuses of power,

which must be identified and addressed. Negative trends in the Global Transparency Index were worrying. Every effort must be made to rectify the situation. The IPU had a vital role to play in that regard. Democracy was never guaranteed; Sweden had been a democracy for 100 years, yet democracy could still be lost. Every generation must therefore win its own democracy in its own contemporary society. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians must represent balance. Dialogue must be ongoing at all times, not only in times of crisis. The fight for democracy was rooted in the effort to continue dialogue.

**Mr. K.M. Ngoga** (East African Legislative Assembly) said that increasing polarization was threatening democracy. Ethnic diversity and economic inequalities were being exploited to gain power by fuelling populism. The spread of misinformation and hate speech was particularly concerning. A balance must be struck between protecting freedom of expression and preventing incitement to hatred. The role of social media was particularly important. Data from Facebook indicated an upsurge in content promoting hate and violence. Public discourse was being weaponized for political gain, with massive disinformation campaigns influencing key decision-making processes in several countries. In East Africa, internet shutdowns had been required during major election periods to prevent the spread of electoral misinformation, announcement of fake election results, dissemination of online hate speech and mobilization of violent protests. Parliaments must harness the potential of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to communicate the correct information to the public. They should also legislate to create an environment conducive to public access to information, and to expand connectivity in rural, underserved areas, and to vulnerable and hard to access people. Awareness-raising campaigns should be held on responsible use of online media. Parliaments should also engage with other stakeholders, including the media, academia, civil society organizations and the private sector, to promote the balance between freedom of expression and the need to eliminate the spread of misinformation. International cooperation was also crucial.

**Mr. A. Farrugia** (Malta) said that modern technologies, in particular social media platforms, were locked in a competition to keep users engaged, and were causing a social dilemma. Social media had their own goals to keep users addicted. Allowing self-worth to be predicated on a social media validation loop was dangerous, in particular for the most vulnerable in society. The urge to connect was human nature, yet social media sowed division. Online division on issues such as climate change was caused by the use of algorithms confining users in echo chambers that validated their opinions. The situation was particularly dangerous as it cemented increasingly extreme viewpoints. Parliaments must therefore rise to the challenge of mainstreaming digital and social media literacy into the political landscape, meeting the challenge of balancing guarantees of freedom of expression, protection of privacy and elimination of incitement to hatred. Parliaments should consider taking legislative measures to tackle online hate speech and the dissemination of misinformation in a balanced and comprehensive manner. Authoritarian regimes must not be allowed to clamp down on legitimate media sources in the name of combatting “fake news”. Transparency in media funding sources was key to assessing the authenticity and trustworthiness of the information reported. Media and digital literacy among the public must also be promoted.

**Ms. F. Zainal** (Bahrain) said that decision-making must be fully participatory to validate and uphold the principles and practices of democracy. Democracy was facing complex, multifaceted threats. Parliaments had a responsibility to protect democratic systems by repairing public trust and encouraging public participation in political life. Trust in democratic institutions had eroded and must be rebuilt. Parliaments should be transparent in their communication with the public. Efforts must be made to overcome societal divisions through dialogue and keep open the lines of communication between all stakeholders, to enable all challenges to be tackled in a transparent and open manner. The more rapidly technological advancement facilitated broader access to information, the more transparent parliaments must become. A culture of democracy and parliamentary values must be promoted. In Bahrain, reforms had been initiated to restore and consolidate democracy through free and fair elections conducted in a manner that respected the rights and freedoms of all citizens. Every effort had been made to respect human rights and guarantee personal freedoms throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, to preserve the highest standards of living and uphold the values and principles of democracy.

**Mr. Park Byeong-Seug** (Republic of Korea) said that political polarization posed a serious threat to democracy around the world, dividing communities and undermining the values of compromise, dialogue, tolerance and moderation. Political polarization and economic inequalities must be overcome to end social division.

In the Republic of Korea, a national unity committee had been formed comprising eminent political figures, academics and journalists to represent the whole political and social spectrum with the aim to develop a new social contract based on reforms of the labour, welfare and innovation sectors. Measures were also being taken to restore parliamentary politics which had suffered owing to conflicts between the ruling and opposition parties. It was therefore necessary to seek consensus through dialogue. Efforts to seek compromise had resulted in a bipartisan agreement to launch a committee on media reform to counter the dissemination of misinformation and extremist views on social media networks. Communication could build consensus which could lead to compromise, which was the only way to restore parliamentary politics. Lastly, efforts were being made to encourage an inter-Korean parliamentary meeting, to seek to overcome the division of the Korean Peninsula. Lasting peace on the Peninsula would contribute significantly to peace and prosperity in Asia and all over the world. The support of the international community was particularly welcome. The COVID-19 pandemic had shown the importance of solidarity and cooperation and had highlighted the dangers of division.

**Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda** (Zimbabwe) said that political polarization posed a severe threat to democracy. Positive institutional reforms and the setting of new democratic standards and inclusive parliamentary processes based on tolerance were therefore essential. Parliaments must strive for multicultural inclusivity in political parties. Economic inequality must be tackled at source, particularly in view of the significant socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic which were reversing progress with regard to development. Many democracies were based on out-of-date constitutions and electoral systems; constitutions should be revised, sound electoral laws enacted, and impartial, independent judiciaries guaranteed. Every effort should also be made to weed out corruption and promote transparency. Climate change was threatening humanity and required urgent action by parliaments. The public must be involved in decision-making and all social groups equally represented in politics. Technological advancement and the rise of social media had radically altered democratic participation and contributed to the proliferation of misinformation, undermining informed debate and the foundations of democracy. Parliaments must legislate in that regard.

The COVID-19 pandemic had posed unprecedented challenges to globalization, personal freedoms, the reliability of information and the ability of democratic institutions to cope with rapidly changing societal demands. Parliaments must exercise critical oversight to ensure that public policies on the pandemic respected rights without creating conflict with the executive. Restrictions on freedom of movement and the right to freedom of assembly, along with profound changes in ways of life, work, study, travel and socializing, would have lasting impacts on society. Many parliamentary activities had been curtailed or suspended. Home schooling had impacted girls in particular; many girls in Zimbabwe had fallen pregnant or been forced into early marriages during the pandemic. Democracy was constantly evolving; the global parliamentary community must work together to take account of changing contexts and promote common understanding.

On the identification of a new COVID-19 variant in southern Africa, several delegations had been affected by newly imposed travel restrictions to those countries and were currently unable to return home from the Assembly. He called on the IPU to make a stand and protect parliamentarians from COVID-19 nationalism.

**Ms. N. Mapisa-Nqakula** (South Africa), *Vice-President of the Assembly*, took the Chair.

**Ms. P. Maharani** (Indonesia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic was leading to significant risk of people falling into extreme poverty and malnutrition. Although vaccines were available, their distribution was uneven. The climate crisis also posed a severe threat. All countries must work towards mitigation and adaptation; climate financing promises must be upheld. Conflict-induced humanitarian crises and security threats also undermined democracy. In a world of complex challenges, the resilience of democracy was being contested. The COVID-19 pandemic had severely affected democratic processes; elections had been postponed around the world, freedom of movement had been limited, and the proliferation of misinformation had increased, giving rise to increasing tension and growing social division. Those challenges were exacerbated by persistent inequalities, lack of access to education and rising injustice, all of which tested the resilience of democracy.

Strengthening democracy required broad participation in decision-making and enabling people to voice their aspirations. Best practices on good governance during crises must be developed and shared. Democracy remained the most effective way to accommodate different views and promote dialogue among people of different backgrounds. Parliament must be at the heart of efforts to nurture democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies, taking account of the changing circumstances. In times of crisis, the role of parliament in representing and upholding the rights of the people was particularly significant. Parliaments must strive to build trust and cooperation. In Indonesia, efforts had been made to increase transparency through the enactment of legislation on public information and a decision to increase parliamentary openness. Parliaments must cooperate in global solidarity to pave the way through the pandemic and protect democracy and build a more equal world.

**Mr. A. Kaisar** (Pakistan) said that despite democratic progress reflected in the global governance system, people-centred government, and public empowerment through technological development, significant challenges remained. The global surge in populism undermined democracy. Hate-based ideologies were fragmenting societies and populist leaders were dividing public opinion by spreading misinformation. In the global order, centres of privilege persisted, widening the gap between principles and practices. A pressing example was that of the situation in Kashmir where the people had been subject to the use of brute force and a range of illegal and unilateral measures by the occupying Indian power which were a clear contravention of the fundamental principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights. The global economic system was unfair and leading to increasing discontent; the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. The COVID-19 pandemic had underscored growing structural inequalities between developed and developing States. The global north was acting in its own interests. Democracy was the best solution to the world's problems. Educated, empowered citizens were key to a functioning democracy, along with robust legal systems and transparent, accountable governance. To strengthen global democratic values and principles global governance should be reformed by way of a revitalization of the General Assembly of the United Nations and renewed efforts to ensure the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

**Mr. H.A. Al-Ghanim** (Qatar) said that the first general elections had been held in Qatar in October 2021 with significant participation. It was a historic moment of freedom and democracy, in full respect of the Constitution, rule of law and international standards. Peace and stability were the foundations of sustainable development. To that end, every effort must be made to restore peace to Palestine and to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people to have their own State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Polarization and division were threatening democracy and undermining peace and stability around the world. International cooperation was key to overcoming hatred, terrorism and extremism. The media had a key role to play in providing balanced and transparent information to the public to counter misinformation and polarization. The Emir of Qatar had underscored the importance of harnessing technologies and tools to improve sustainable development and communication between countries and peoples. The appropriate use of ICTs was key to maintaining democracy. While freedom of expression must be respected, every effort must be made to eliminate the spread of disinformation and the populist misuse of the internet. The balance was a difficult one; parliaments, as representatives of the people, had a key role in ensuring that the balance was struck and that all minorities and vulnerable groups felt heard and represented. Progress would not be made without equality. Climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic were exacerbating inequalities. International cooperation was key to overcoming those challenges. Assistance should be provided to small island States to mitigate the impacts of climate change and achieve sustainable development.

**Mr. K.H. Al Mawaali** (Oman) said that dialogue was the key to understanding between all peoples and races and would consolidate stability and prosperity. Policies based on dialogue and seeking peaceful solutions to conflict were fundamental for the well-being, security and development of all people. Constructive dialogue must therefore be fostered at all levels. The abuse of social media channels to spread misinformation under the pretext of freedom of expression must be tackled. Parliamentarians had a key role to play in that regard. A concerted, integrated approach was needed to combat hate speech which undermined every community. Tolerance among all nations and religions was the most noble value, the principle of communication and the pillar of social cohesion. Efforts were being made in Oman to promote



tolerance and in particular to bridge gaps that had been widened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuous efforts were being made to consolidate communication and to promote peace and stability to ensure a safe and decent life for all.

**Mr. T. Xhaferi** (North Macedonia) said that trust in political institutions was strained, in particular as a result of the restrictions imposed in many countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During such unprecedented times, it was even more crucial than ever that parliaments must represent the most vulnerable and marginalized, and ensure that all voices were heard. Dialogue and communication were the only way to overcome increasing polarization and to foster hope and cooperation. While a certain degree of competition between political parties was healthy for democracy, polarization bred division in society and could result in unrest. The imposition of restrictions during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic divided opinions and fuelled frustration, which in turn became a breeding ground for disinformation and destruction. Parliaments had a key role in defending the right to freedom of expression, while guarding against the spread of disinformation and hate speech. Parliaments must therefore promote a culture of tolerance, inclusion and cooperation. International parliamentary cooperation, with sincere and transparent communication, was needed to restore public trust in institutions, promote inclusivity and build democracy and peace. Membership of the IPU showed commitment to common efforts to address modern challenges through political leadership and solidarity, to protect democracy and ensure peace and stability for all.

**Mr. H.A. El Gibaly** (Egypt) said that parliamentarians were the voice of the free people; democracy was the foundation of good governance. Democracy guaranteed people's participation in decision-making and thus consolidated security, stability and prosperity. All nations strove to achieve democracy to cement social cohesion. Yet democracy was under threat. The rise in populist, extremist messages and hate speech had provided a breeding ground for terror and therefore constituted a threat to peace and security. The dissemination of misinformation to mislead and misinform people was eroding trust in democratic institutions. Alongside which, the social, economic and political repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic had constituted a serious test of the strength of democracy. The imposition of rules and restrictions had hindered electoral and constitutional processes, and in some countries had deepened divisions in society. Honesty and transparency were crucial for peaceful coexistence. The exclusion of particular groups, communities and minorities must be avoided at all costs; parliaments, as representatives of the people, must ensure that all voices were heard. Inclusivity was crucial and diversity must be acknowledged as a source of richness, not as an excuse to sow the seeds of division. The right to self-determination for all must be upheld and respected, and cultural diversity fostered. In Egypt, a national vision had been put in place consolidating democracy and citizenship, and ensuring fair parliamentary representation for women, young people and people with disabilities. Particular attention had been paid to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring the accessibility of public services. Every effort was being made to maintain parliamentary activity throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The world's parliaments must work together to overcome threats to democracy and achieve prosperity and stability for all nations and peoples.

**Mr. A. Alasoomi** (Arab Parliament) said that parliamentarians were the cornerstone of democratic development, through their legislative and oversight roles. Democratic development was no longer a matter of legislating and oversight, but rather had developed to encompass aspects such as women's empowerment, youth inclusion in decision-making processes, advancements in the right to information and the engagement of civil society. Democracy required sustainable development, the elimination of hate speech and intolerance, and the promotion of dialogue. Parliaments must keep pace with societal developments and must develop the tools and mechanisms to engage the public and build trust. The 143rd IPU Assembly should not be a talking shop but a stepping stone to practical action by parliaments to strengthen democracy around the world. The Arab Parliament proposed that the IPU should prepare a guidebook for parliamentary action to promote democracy around the world.

**Mr. E. Sinzohagera** (Burundi) said that democracy was a fundamental right of citizens, which should be enjoyed freely, equally, in full transparency and with respect for differences of opinion and interests. Democracy could not exist without true partnership and equality between men and women in public decision-making. Women's representation had reached 39.2 per cent in the National Assembly of Burundi and 41 per cent in the Senate. Democracy also required

institutions at all levels to be truly representative of the whole of society. All measures should be taken to ensure that the voices of all people were represented in legislation and in monitoring government action. To overcome Burundi's history of exclusion, the Constitution provided quotas for women's representation on electoral lists. The Senate had been reinstituted in 2001, with a quota of 30 per cent seats for women. Regulations were in place to ensure that no group would be denied access to public services. Free political competition was guaranteed by ensuring the right of all citizens to participate in political life, without discrimination. Free and fair elections had been held in 2020.

Democracy must also be based on freedom of opinion and expression, and an active and free civil society. Yet measures must also be taken to ensure that civil society movements were not used as a tool for destabilization. Parliaments must take measures to protect freedom of information and freedom of expression, while ensuring that such freedoms were not exploited to fuel division. Poverty was also undermining democracy. Burundi's national development plan aimed to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions across the country. A project to mitigate the impacts of deforestation and climate change had been launched. All parliaments must strive to defend democratic principles. To that end, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, every effort must be made to eliminate inequalities in vaccine distribution.

**Mr. D. Das Neves** (São Tome and Principe) said that the COVID-19 pandemic continued to rage on. Mass vaccination was taking place in some countries but not in others. Greater cohesion and unity in fighting the pandemic was imperative. The pandemic had grown exponentially and fuelled societal division. Concerted efforts were needed at national and international levels to counter the multifarious ill-effects of the pandemic through cooperation while taking account of national specificities. Democracy must not just be considered a political system; democratic principles should be an integral part of the daily lives of citizens and their interactions in society. To overcome division and build community, the rights of minorities must be defended in decision-making. Migrants' rights must be protected; their social rights must be upheld, and they must be able to participate in decisions that affected them and live a life of freedom and dignity. While differences of opinion were normal in democracy, entrenched division could impede democratic processes, erode trust in public institutions and lead to civil unrest. Divisions must therefore be overcome while respecting all opinions. Dissemination of misinformation and incitement to hatred, whether online or offline, constituted a violation of human rights. Parliaments must therefore legislate against the spread of disinformation and hate speech, as well as raise public awareness and ensure the inclusion of minorities in all aspects of society.

**Mr. J. Pizarro Soto** (Latin American and Caribbean Parliament) said that democracy was an ever-changing political system based on the premise of the sovereignty of the people and their right to elect political leadership. Democracy was not a static concept; it changed with emerging realities and was therefore the most effective political system to protect society. Yet democracy was facing challenges posed by discontent fuelled by the spread of misinformation which was being used to polarize societies for the benefit of a few and to the detriment of society. Cooperation and dialogue between States and international organizations were essential to build lasting solutions for the benefit of all in a fair and equitable manner. In Latin America and the Caribbean democracy was in crisis. The rise of governments that had flouted free and fair electoral processes and wished to hold on to power indefinitely had left the region in a state of polarization, thereby eroding years of efforts to ensure respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. Democracy was more than just electoral processes; it meant the active involvement of citizens and civil society in all aspects of life. Good governance must work for the benefit of all, to enhance quality of life through economic stability, employment, and the enjoyment of social rights. Restrictions imposed in many places in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had threatened democracy, and vaccine inequity had caused rifts in international relations. Cooperation was essential and a global agreement must be reached on intellectual property related to vaccines.

**Mr. S. Patra** (India) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was unfortunate that a particular country had chosen to undermine the general debate by raising extraneous issues. Any interference in India's internal affairs was unacceptable. The Indian territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh had been, and remained, an integral part of the territory of India. Pakistan had no *locus standi* to interfere. The Indian Government had called on Pakistan repeatedly to vacate the territory. It was ironic that a known exporter of terrorists was claiming to champion the cause of human rights.

Item 2 of the agenda**Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda**  
(A/143/2-P.1, P.2.rev and P.3–P.5)

**The President** said that five requests had been received for the inclusion of an emergency item on the agenda of the Assembly.

**Mr. F. Zon** (Indonesia), introducing his delegation's proposed emergency item entitled *Global parliamentary support for the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians (A/143/2-P.1)*, said that the humanitarian situation of the people of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian territories remained gravely concerning and had worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The people of Palestine required increased political support. The international parliamentary community must condemn the aggressions carried out by Israel in the occupied territories, in particular East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, which had killed and injured many civilians, including women and children. International commitment must remain resolute, to support the two-State solution and the maintenance of international and regional peace and security. Support for the Palestinian cause was even more crucial during the pandemic; Palestinian access to health care remained severely restricted and the Israeli permit system and movement restrictions had posed serious challenges to access to health services. The IPU was most suitably placed to support measures to address the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

**Mr. J. Wadehul** (Germany), introducing his delegation's proposed emergency item entitled *Stopping human trafficking, halting human rights abuses and working towards free and fair elections in Belarus (A/143/2-P.2.rev)*, said that while migration was a well-known phenomenon, an unprecedented situation had arisen in Belarus. President Lukashenko, a dictator, had brought migrants to Belarus specifically to use them as human weapons against other countries, bringing them to the borders of Poland and the Baltic States and leaving them in temperatures below 0°C. The aim was to put pressure on European countries to withdraw the sanctions they had imposed against Belarus in protest against the behaviour of a ruthless dictator who had rigged elections and imprisoned protestors. The use of men, women and children for political force constituted a new category of crime against humanity. His delegation therefore called for a halt to human trafficking and human rights abuses and for steps to be taken to ensure free and fair elections in Belarus. That notwithstanding, his delegation wished to withdraw its proposal in favour of that proposed by the African Group on vaccine equity in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. His delegation would bring up the question of Belarus before the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights.

**Ms. S. Núñez-Cerón** (Mexico), introducing her delegation's proposed emergency item entitled *Impetus to regional development of countries with high levels of international migration (A/143/2-P.3)*, said that there was a humanitarian and health crisis taking place in Latin America and the Caribbean. International cooperation was key to addressing it. Dialogue and agreement should be used to protect the most vulnerable. Imbalances in the global economic system had resulted in millions living in poverty. Violations of economic, social and cultural rights had been exacerbated by natural disasters. In Haiti, for example, serious poverty and lack of opportunities had been worsened by a major earthquake in 2010 which had displaced thousands of people and had halted social and economic development. The number of migrants requesting asylum in the Americas had increased exponentially. The causes of forced migration must be addressed. The discussion of the matter as an emergency item on the agenda of the Assembly would be a demonstration of international solidarity for efforts to overcome the crisis. People should be provided with development opportunities in their countries of origin so as to tackle the root causes of forced migration at source. Transit countries must legislate to ensure that migrants and asylum seekers were not returned at borders, that children of migrants and unaccompanied minors were not detained at borders, and that family unity was at the centre of migration policy.

**Mr. K. Kosachev** (Russian Federation), introducing his delegation's proposed emergency item, entitled *The vital necessity of ensuring uninterrupted parliamentary activities during pandemics* (A/143/2-P.4), said that the topic was self-explanatory. The COVID-19 pandemic had led to extraordinary conditions in all aspects of life for everyone around the world. Under such circumstances, the role of parliaments was particularly important. Human rights must be protected, and parliaments must legislate to respond to new, unique and unexpected challenges. The global parliamentary community should share experiences and discuss best practices to ensure that measures taken during a pandemic did not interrupt parliamentary activity. That notwithstanding, he wished to withdraw his delegation's proposal in favour of that submitted by the African Group on vaccine equity, which was even more urgent. He asked whether, with the agreement of the African Group, the Russian Federation might be added to the list of co-sponsors of the Group's emergency item.

**Mr. J.K. Mhagama** (United Republic of Tanzania), introducing on behalf of the African Group a proposed emergency item entitled *Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic* (A/143/2-P.5), said that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected everyone in the world. In Africa, the impacts had been exacerbated by pre-existing vulnerability to crisis owing to fragile health systems, less developed economies and a wide reliance on tourism and trade that had been decimated by the closure of borders. While 6.4 billion vaccine doses had been administered globally, only 2.5 million had been administered in Africa despite the fact that the continent accounted for 17.4 per cent of the world's population. Such inequity ran counter to the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the "leave no-one behind" principle. Such a situation was contrary to the right to life. No-one could be safe from COVID-19 until everyone was safe. The virus must be eradicated from developing and developed countries alike. The African Group would be glad to add the Russian Federation to the list of co-sponsors of the emergency item.

**Mr. F. Zon** (Indonesia) and **Ms. S. Núñez-Cerón** (Mexico) said that they wished to withdraw their delegations' proposals in favour of the proposal made by the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the African Group.

*The Assembly approved by acclamation the proposal for an emergency item entitled "Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic".*

**Ms. M. Vasilevich** (Belarus) said that Belarus rejected the statement made by Germany which had given a politicized message of misinformation, presented in a disrespectful manner. The Polish authorities were violating international standards, using water cannons filled with pesticide against asylum seekers, including women and children, who were attempting to cross Polish borders. Such treatment was inhumane. The IPU and its Assembly should not be used as a platform for abuse. Belarus remained ready to negotiate.

**The President** said that the emergency item would be added to the agenda of the 143rd IPU Assembly as Item 7.

*The sitting rose at 18:15.*

## Final Agenda

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1. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the 143rd Assembly
  2. Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda
  3. General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*
  4. *Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*  
(Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights)
  5. Reports of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security; Standing Committee on Sustainable Development; and Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs
  6. Approval of the subject item for the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights at the 145th IPU Assembly and appointment of the Rapporteurs
  7. Emergency item: *Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic*
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## **Emergency item entitled *Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic***

**SITTING OF SUNDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2021**

(Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 09:20, with Ms. F. Zainal (Bahrain), Vice-President of the Assembly, in the Chair.*

### Item 7 of the agenda

**Plenary Debate on the emergency item: *Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic***  
(A/143/7-DR)

**Ms. E. Afanasieva** (Russian Federation), expressing support for the draft resolution on the emergency item, as set out in document A/143/7-DR, said that access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments was for many countries hampered by such factors as protectionism and non-recognition of certain vaccines. Assessment of the quality, safety and effectiveness of new vaccines and drugs should be accelerated by the World Health Organization (WHO). In the interim, her Government stood ready to supply Sputnik V and Sputnik Light vaccines to individual countries and through organizations such as the African Union. Large quantities of data on the safety and immunogenicity of those vaccines had been gathered in 2021 by the roughly 100 countries where they were registered for use. Millions of doses of the highly effective single-dose Sputnik Light vaccine would be available for delivery in December 2021 to countries wishing to register it and purchase supplies.

**Mr. B. Mahtab** (India), also supporting the draft resolution, said that his country favoured a waiver of certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) so that capacities for manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines could be scaled up rapidly in the interest of equitable, timely and affordable access to those vaccines as well as to products for dealing with the pandemic. A standard customs clearance protocol should also be developed, in consultation with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), to ensure that critical manufacturing supplies flowed swiftly and freely. Additional mechanisms should be devised to ease the import and export of input supplies and raw materials for vaccine manufacturing, with travel restrictions furthermore reconsidered so as to facilitate the movement of the critical workforce involved in such manufacturing and in immunization. As a member of the Quad Vaccine Partnership, India had worked to expand safe, effective and quality-assured vaccine production and equitable access to vaccines for developing countries, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. It had also supplied 70 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to over 95 countries and believed that the shift to single-dose vaccines should be postponed until the acute phase of the pandemic was over.

**Ms. N. Mapisa-Nqakula** (South Africa), decrying the effects of vaccine nationalism, said that she had been shocked to learn only a few hours earlier that her delegation and no doubt others from southern Africa were unable to return home as planned. The reason was that all flights from Spain to that region had been cancelled as part of restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of a new COVID-19 variant recently discovered in South Africa and reported by its scientists. The feeling was that the region was now being penalized for having shared that information, potentially deterring other countries from doing the same on discovery of other variants. The IPU was the ideal forum in which to raise the matter and adopt a robust resolution highlighting the continued colonialization of those living in her part of the globe.

**Mr. A. Salman** (Bahrain) said that, with its implications for human rights and sustainable socioeconomic development, the matter of vaccine equity was of utmost importance. His country had repeatedly called for the fair and equal distribution of vaccines to all peoples without discrimination, and for international solidarity and cooperation to that end so as to promote a more rapid slowdown of the pandemic. In Bahrain, COVID-19 deaths and infections had fallen thanks in no small part to its high vaccination rate of over 90 per cent. Members must use the vital platform provided by the IPU to raise their voices in support of vaccine equity, above all for countries in Africa.

**Ms. R. Kavakci Kan** (Turkey) said that the pandemic had brought home the reality of global interconnectedness and interdependence. As a country's health safety depended on the health safety of all others, it was a matter of self-interest to ensure that populations around the world, especially the most vulnerable groups, benefited from like health services. In a historic moment, the IPU Members had united in their support for the emergency item proposed by the African Group, sacrificing their own agendas in the wider interest of humanity. The Turkish Parliament, which had lost two of its members to COVID-19, extended its condolences to all nations for their own losses. By acting in solidarity to ensure equal access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatment, the global community would find a way through the pandemic.

**A representative of Yemen** said that his was a prime example of poor countries disproportionately affected by the pandemic owing to the failure of wealthy countries and the international community in working for vaccine equity which was a human right. Yemen counted seven parliamentarians and numerous academics among its losses to COVID-19. It also called on the international community to exert pressure on the Houthi militias to desist from preventing the vaccination of Yemenis living in the areas under their control.

**Ms. K. Slassi** (Morocco), noting that the pandemic had changed the behaviour of individuals and communities worldwide, said that her country had vigorously engaged from the outset in the efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It had been among the first to roll out the vaccine nationwide and, moreover, to send vaccine supplies to countries in Africa – 25 of them in all. It was furthermore producing vaccines for use around Africa as well as domestically. With some 25 million of its population double vaccinated and a further 2 million having received a booster dose, it was leading the way towards herd immunity, which would nonetheless remain globally unachievable unless all countries, especially in Africa, had fair and equal access to vaccines and treatments. The pandemic had highlighted the importance of solidarity, cohesion and collaborative efforts to combat global crises.

**Mr. A. Gajadien** (Suriname) agreed with the views expressed but suggested that the draft resolution should reflect the fact that COVID-19 made no distinction among countries by referring to all nations instead of specifically to Africa.

**A representative of Uruguay** said that the Assembly had demonstrated its maturity in deciding to include the present emergency item in its agenda – for which the subject matter eminently qualified on all counts – without a vote. In his country, life had essentially returned to normal as a result of preventive and awareness measures coupled with a successful COVID-19 vaccination drive in which some 79 per cent of inhabitants had been fully vaccinated and roughly 40 per cent had received a booster dose. The relatively small number of deaths and hospitalizations were generally among the unvaccinated. No country could yet be safe, however, unless all countries were safe, as clearly indicated by the flight cancellations mentioned earlier. All must therefore work in solidarity, or otherwise out of self-interest, to attain that goal.

**Ms. H. Martins** (Portugal) said that her country had embarked on a drive to vaccinate its entire population, starting with the most vulnerable groups, and advocated the sharing of vaccines with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) as a critical step towards vaccine equity. In July 2021, it had tripled its supply of COVID-19 vaccines to member States of that community, specifically those in Africa and Timor-Leste. It had furthermore called on its fellow members of the European Union (EU) to forge stronger solidarity in working to improve vaccine access and distribution. The international community must likewise work in solidarity to protect humanity from the virus, including by speeding up vaccination in Africa.



**Mr. J.P. Letelier** (Chile), expressing condolences to the families of parliamentarians who had lost their lives to COVID-19 and commending the African Group on its emergency item proposal, said that the pandemic had thrown the spotlight on global problems – such as vaccine inequity and the variable pricing policies applied by the pharmaceutical industry – that could be addressed only through collective multilateral action. A major concern was that climate change would create conditions favourable to further viral mutations and that vaccines would be permanently needed to combat the resulting threat to humanity which would pose a costly challenge, especially for least developed countries. In preparation for possible future pandemics, multilateral mechanisms should be established to require pharmaceutical companies to make vaccines accessible to all at sustainable and affordable prices.

**Mr. E. Kanku** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), concurring with the view that vaccination was the only effective remedy for COVID-19, said that the virus had created desolation in his country; many parliamentarians and university professors had been lost to the virus. Even if persuasion and information were sufficient to counter the widespread conspiracy propaganda leading to vaccine refusal and hesitancy, his country would lack the doses required to vaccinate the entire population. To resolve both those problems and as part of the global response to the pandemic, the case had been made for manufacturing vaccines in Africa for which well-to-do countries would need to show financial solidarity as part of the global response to the pandemic. The virus would otherwise know no bounds and a suicidal vaccine apartheid would be established, with low-income countries the main victims. The initiative to waive the patents on COVID-19 vaccines – essentially a global public good – must be supported to allow the mass production of those vaccines in Africa and promote the vaccination of all inhabitants of the continent.

**Mr. J.K. Mhagama** (United Republic of Tanzania), closing the debate, expressed sincere thanks to all the IPU Members for their unanimous support for the emergency item proposed by the African Group and special gratitude to the authors of the alternative proposals for having withdrawn their submissions in favour of that item, irrespective of their own pressing emergency issues. Such support was indicative of a world coming together as one family. The contribution of all those who had spoken on such a timely matter of concern was also greatly appreciated. The key takeaways were that the impact of COVID-19 had altered socioeconomic patterns around the world; drastically changed the rules of the global economy and crashed stock markets worldwide; and led to unprecedented budget deficits for parliaments and limited the fulfilment of the latter's constitutional mandate.

The financial abyss caused by the pandemic was further exacerbated by the continuing virus mutation which put pressure on the capabilities of States to pursue vaccine production in the interest of fair global access for all, in particular the least developed countries. The inequitable access to vaccines had unfortunately had a deleterious impact on the global COVID 19 response initiatives. Key questions to be confronted related to why the poorest countries were left so far behind in the race to vaccinate their populations while high-income countries were able to vaccinate the majority of their citizens; what developed countries could do to help; whether enough had been invested in response preparedness; why there was no prenegotiated platform for tools and supplies; and whether parliamentarians could rally behind coordinated international financing for pandemic preparedness and response. The pandemic was a wake-up call for global solidarity which was the only way to save the world from the COVID-19 pandemic and all other future pandemics.

**The President**, thanking all speakers in the debate, said that the simple message was that all humanity must work together for a safe and healthy world. Persons wishing to join the drafting committee tasked with finalizing the resolution on the emergency item, which would be constituted of maximum of 11 persons on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and political and gender balance, were invited to come forward.

**Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda** (Zimbabwe), speaking on a point of order, said that the Assembly, through its President, must urgently find a way home for delegations from southern Africa whose return travel arrangements had been cancelled. Concerning the debate on the emergency item, he suggested that a period longer than one hour should be allocated for that purpose in future to allow as many views as possible to be taken into account in the related draft resolution.

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, agreed that the emergency item merited more discussion time and said that, on learning about the problem of travel arrangements, the IPU had immediately communicated with the Spanish authorities which had promised a solution for the safe return home of the delegations concerned.

*Mr. G. Coutinho Rodríguez (Uruguay), Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair.*

Item 3 of the agenda

**General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy:  
Overcoming division and building community***

(continued)

(A/143/3-Inf.1 and Inf.2)

**Mr. A. Simonyan** (Armenia) said that his country, an important regional player and active participant in all efforts to strengthen democracy, security and stability, had introduced sectoral reforms to ensure that its path to democracy remained firm. Recent events in its history had demonstrated the strong will and commitment of its people to the rule of law, with democracy as the only alternative for the new Armenia. The snap parliamentary elections held in June 2021 augured well for overcoming bitter divisions and working with the opposition to resolve complex domestic problems in addition to finding a lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with assistance by the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The fight against corruption and associated crime was a main priority for Armenia, which also fully valued press freedom as a critical pillar of democracy and therefore imposed no media censorship. As well as developing tools for countering fake news, disinformation and hate speech, any healthy democracy must include women and youth in its decision-making processes. In the spirit of further empowering its young parliamentarians, the Armenian Parliament had embraced the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign. Mindful that democratic development was severely challenged by destabilization and regional conflict, Armenia had engaged only two days earlier in Russian-hosted talks with Azerbaijan aimed at resolving all outstanding issues between the two countries through honest dialogue as opposed to use of force. The well-being of future generations depended on such efforts to respond to contemporary challenges to democracy.

**Mr. J.Y. Ndugai** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation's speaking time would be allocated to two of its members, the first a member of the country's opposition and the second a young parliamentarian.

**Ms. E.N. Matiko** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that representative democracy was preferable to the winner-takes-all model, which bred division, polarization, hostility and intolerance. In Africa, the level of democracy hinged largely on the goodwill of the leader of the day, while in her country, a recent shift towards the more draconian model suggested that its democracy was not yet fully internalized. Efforts must focus on building political bridges and eschewing competition to create a representative democracy based on cooperation between ruling and opposition parties. For their part, parliamentarians must bond with and speak for the people or risk losing their relevance.

Whereas parliamentary democracies were generally regarded as effective and efficient in working for the public good, the trend in presidential democracies had been towards a loss of public faith and trust in parliaments for doing the bidding of the executive to protect the interests of the ruling class. All repressive laws were the result of parliaments acting as lackeys of the executive. Lastly, parliamentarians should seek to increase discourse around the idea of gender democracy fast gaining pace as a catalyst for change.

**Mr. E.I. Kingu** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that democracy was about public welfare but that African fears in that context had often been marginalized. The heart-warming reaction at the current Assembly to the issue of vaccine equity had, however, sent a signal to Africa that the world could be as one in listening to a minority voice and taking action. The signal was one of good governance, of protecting lives, creating global stability and providing equal opportunities for all. Democracy was unable to flourish in an environment of human rights violations, instability and chaos that brought adverse consequences for livelihoods. It was thanks to a focus on public well-being and on engaging all groups, including women and youth, in every aspect of life that his country had remained politically stable throughout its 60 years of independence.

**Mr. M. Sentop** (Turkey) said that the unprecedented series of splits and crises over the past 20 years had had major socioeconomic repercussions worldwide. Polarization was damaging democratic institutions and eroding such principles as tolerance and peaceful coexistence to the detriment of everyday relations; populism too was another threat to democracy and human rights. In the face of such developments, international organizations unfortunately continued to operate in silos, as exemplified by the recent decision of the Council of Europe, following a backlash from certain politicians in its host country of France, to halt its valuable hijab campaign that promoted respect for Muslim women. Discrimination on grounds of religion or other status was a greater threat to social integrity and unity than any general political divisions. Given the growing levels of xenophobia and Islamophobia in particular, such discrimination should be openly addressed and the hypocrisy of those purporting to defend human rights and democracy should be exposed.

The COVID-19 pandemic had brought home the truth of a globalized world, one in which selfish vaccine nationalism had no place. Similar callousness and irresponsibility were exhibited by countries that failed to atone for their history of exploitation and help fleeing migrants. The Mediterranean was becoming a mass grave for such migrants, including from boats inhumanely pushed into Turkish waters by Greece. By contrast, as the world's biggest host to irregular migrants numbering some five million, Turkey was the conscience of humanity. There would be a price to pay for not treating all inhabitants of the world as full equals.

**Mr. K. Kuchava** (Georgia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected political stability and deepened political polarization in many countries, including Georgia, where residents in its Russian-occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali endured, among other things, daily violence, unjustifiable restrictions and lack of access to health care. Bold and innovative strategies for advancing democratic resilience, building strong communities, forging a sustainable future and entrenching democracy should be aimed at enhancing synergies among local stakeholders; engaging all stakeholders in constructing a citizen-oriented future; and reinventing the significant role of parliaments in defending and reinvigorating democracy, as well as in preventing intense political competition from sliding into destructive polarization.

For its part, in addition to implementing a pro-Western foreign policy and pioneering new reforms for prosperity and peace, the Georgian Parliament would continue working to promote further democratic development, human rights protection and institution-building, all of which would assist its application for EU membership in 2024. Meaningful, constructive and results-oriented parliamentary discussions would also continue, as would the exercise of vigorous legislative and oversight powers in the best interests of the entire nation. With climate change effects in mind, all parliaments should act without delay to drive significant progress towards a healthy and sustainable future for the upcoming generations. The Georgian Parliament stood ready to cooperate closely with its counterparts towards securing lively democracies to counter the dangers posed by undemocratic forces working ferociously to undermine such efforts.

**Mr. A.P. Sapkota** (Nepal) said that, while prevalent as the most preferred form of rule, democracy was not without its challenges, including the overwhelming proliferation of social media easily utilized to spread misinformation fast and wide to a large demographic. Political institutions must respond effectively to regain public trust lost as a result and to heal division, resentment and hatred by identifying their causes and engaging marginalized groups in decision-making as well as in the mainstream of national life. As the living embodiment of democracy, parliaments must earn trust and respect by ensuring justice and fairness for those groups and make citizens believe that democracy worked by increasing their participation in its processes and ensuring that no one was left behind.

In Nepal, frustration born of the long-standing marginalization of various communities had led in 2015 to the promulgation of a rights-based constitution enshrining the fundamental principles of participatory and inclusive democracy. The country's commitment to creating a society founded on those principles had produced promising results. Women currently accounted for one third of members of the Federal Parliament and some 40 per cent of provincial and local assembly members. Affirmative action had also increased the representation of marginalized communities in governance structures. Consolidated efforts through the extraordinary forum provided by the IPU would complement the actions taken by political leaderships, in tandem with innovative solutions to emerging challenges of social division, towards the achievement of peace, security and just societies.

**Mr. A. Frick** (Liechtenstein) said that, until relatively recently, it had been easy to maintain an overview of the media landscape which had reflected a weight of opinions generally in line with main social trends, meaning that audiences had also been proportional to that weight. Owing to distribution costs, it had been difficult for new non-mainstream views to gain traction, in contrast to the current situation in which such views could be instantly aired, free of cost, and exert influence through the now ubiquitous social media and messenger services. The content was, however, largely driven by its entertainment value, with new communication formats described as “edutainment” and “infotainment”, ultimately catching the institutions of democracy off guard.

Populists had successfully grasped how to incorporate current trends into a rhetoric that went down easily and released emotions, thus quickly gaining followers – as was their right within the bounds of the law and decency in any democracy – through oversimplified communication that appealed to the gut rather than the head. In working to convey more balanced positions, politicians should endeavour to communicate in plainer language that, while of a high standard, could be more widely understood. As politicians were accustomed to being held accountable for their decisions, the likelihood was that their solutions would never be as simple as those of political infotainers. With clear messages focused on actual benefits, however, they could massively improve public understanding of those solutions. If all information in a democracy were presented in an understandable and accessible way, people would make good decisions.

**Mr. K. Lusaka** (Kenya) said that, while democracy triumphed in most countries, citizens in old, new and emerging democracies alike had witnessed a creeping disillusionment with its practice. Parliaments, especially in Africa, had a key role to play in addressing that painful paradox. As the embodiment of democratic ideals, parliaments epitomized the will of the people whose expectations they carried and characterized in their response to societal needs and challenges. Parliaments also had a unique responsibility to reconcile conflicting interests through dialogue, participatory governance and compromise and to exercise oversight of the executive.

Over the previous decade, parliaments had endeavoured to engage more effectively with the public, improve their working methods and become more representative of their electorate, as well as more accessible and accountable, more open and transparent in their procedures, and more efficient in their key tasks of legislation and scrutiny. The growing interest in democratic values and good governance reflected the increasing acceptance that both were indispensable to sustainable development. In functional democracies, governments must respect all people, including those who had not voted for them.

**Ms. J. Oduol** (Kenya) said that the challenges to democracy were political instability, corruption, poor governance structure, and systems that allowed for information overload and propaganda. The role of parliaments in enhancing democracy was to ensure government by the people, for the people, through legislation, oversight and proper procedures. Parliaments must serve as the mediating institution between government and society, in particular political parties, ensure public participation that allowed the voices of all groups to be reflected in policies and legislation, strengthen accountability, and enact legislation for civil society. In addition, they must be socially and politically representative of all diversities, guarantee equal opportunities, and be transparent, open and accessible to the public through media platforms. In conducting their business, parliaments must engage the public, remain answerable to the electorate for their performance, and retain their integrity in accordance with democratic values that served the interest of the public and not any self-interest.

**Ms. N. Mapisa-Nqakula** (South Africa) said that her country supported a waiver of the relevant TRIPS provisions in order to facilitate access to life-saving vaccines. Vaccine inequity represented the skewed experiences of democracy around the world; vaccine nationalism must stop. Widely adopted as *the* system of government, democracy had levelled the political playing field and created order where there had been none, empowering humanity to have a say and participate in national affairs, bringing about the recognition of women's rights, promoting accountability and facilitating cooperation and peace. Whether its success was measurable in all cases by the same token was, however, questionable. To survive, it must be responsive to the socioeconomic plight of all those in the system, while failure to protect its legitimacy and demonstrate moral authority would cause a populist backlash.

In addition to respect for the rule of law and human rights protection, discussions around IPU objectives should focus on the right to access justice, which would entail the establishment of democratic institutions reflecting all diversities and the repeal of discriminatory laws. It was furthermore critical to combat all forms of corruption and malfeasance and ensure that all oversight bodies, including parliaments, were adequately resourced. Also affecting the viability of democracies was the disturbing trend among democratically elected governments, especially in the COVID-19 context, to adopt authoritarian tactics to quash dissent and curtail freedom of expression and of the press. Lastly, as in all situations of instability, women had been the most affected in the pandemic, which had seen an increase in gender-based violence.

**Ms. J. Nunu Kumba** (South Sudan), in outlining her country's experiences of relevance to the subject of the debate, said that, born in the wake of bitter episodes of political marginalization and exclusion, South Sudan was a multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-faith, multilingual and multiracial entity challenged by how to unite all its diversities in peaceful coexistence and engage them effectively in governance. The post-independence setback of a devastating civil war had been overcome by way of a peace agreement that had brought together political and non-political actors in the efforts to resolve the conflict and promote reconciliation and healing. Formed in 2020, the Transitional Government of National Unity was implementing reforms across all sectors aimed at steering the country towards democratic governance, which would promote unity in diversity and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, with elections scheduled for 2023. The involvement of women and youth in governance structures, including Parliament, and the number of women holding senior public office were striking milestones already achieved.

In the light of lessons learned in South Sudan, parliaments should work to raise public awareness of the danger of community divides; legislate to prohibit hate speech and offensive language; cooperate in promoting national unity through public engagement to prevent further polarization in communities; underscore the importance of preserving diversity and unity; involve women, youth, minorities and vulnerable groups in decision-making; increase their own gender and youth sensitivity; and help to encourage dialogue as the best way forward to bridging divides and resolving differences.

**Ms. M. Alva Prieto** (Peru) said that, in July 2021, new presidential and parliamentary terms of office, including her own, had begun in Peru. Her party had presided over the country's transition from dictatorship, culminating in 2001 in democratic elections that had since continued to be held as required. Under her presidency, the Peruvian Congress had developed a legislative agenda aimed at meeting public expectations in the wake of the pandemic through reviving the national economy, generating employment, bolstering the institutional framework and improving education and health care.

Congress was also working to strengthen democracy and the rule of law so as to restore political and constitutional stability, which had been undermined in an ongoing crisis that had resulted in its dissolution in 2019 by Peru's then President. The President had eventually been impeached and voted out of office by Congress on grounds of permanent moral incapacity. Since that time, a law had been approved to limit the executive's power to dissolve parliament by invoking, as he had done, the constitutional mechanism of a vote of confidence. Under the law, presidents were empowered to seek a vote of confidence only on government policies, and not on constitutional reforms, but could still be impeached on grounds of moral incapacity. As to the current President, his bid to seek a referendum on the establishment of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution had created new instability, affecting in turn the national economy. The Peruvian Congress would continue to defend democracy and its own role as a democratic institution.

**Mr. G. Migliore** (Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)) said that, with respect to the first challenge to democracy, namely political division and the resulting lack of security, PAM sought to provide a platform for political dialogue to support regional peace and reconciliation processes, bolster counter-terrorism efforts, strengthen democratic institutions, and find ways for practical cooperation. Concerning the second challenge of economic uncertainty and long-term economic sustainability, PAM shared best legislative practices across regions and worked closely with key stakeholders, organizing many events on economic recovery. In connection with the third challenge, a cultural one relating to societal polarization, rising hate speech and radicalization, and a dramatic increase in gender-based violence, PAM sought to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue, education and human rights in its legislative efforts. Among other activities, it was also poised to launch its own Women's Parliamentary Forum.

*Mr. A. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) took the Chair.*

**Ms. A. González** (Panama) said that, in her country, new technologies were bringing citizens closer to the legislature, as they were able to follow parliamentary activities, including debates on bills and citizen-driven initiatives, and to access information more rapidly. Internal administrative procedures had been facilitated by an online platform that allowed electronic voting and the presentation of bills through portable devices, saving paper in the process. Those new technologies, however, could encourage misinformation that clouded judgement and impaired democracy, a fact that underscored the importance of commitment to transparency to minimize doubts about the role of parliaments in public administration. In her region, where social protests had erupted in 2019, only 55 per cent of people surveyed favoured democracy over other forms of government and a similar percentage disapproved of government actions.

The onset of the pandemic had exacerbated existing structural problems, increasing public distrust of the political class, who were in fact human beings whose vocation it was to be part of the solution and to raise the voice of those most in need. Duty-bound to safeguard the purest expression of democracy embodying the will of voters, parliamentarians must continue working for stronger cooperation and friendship with others and for self-improvement. The Panamanian Parliament, in its pursuit of participatory democracy, provided space for citizen engagement in legislative processes from start to finish and prioritized horizontal dialogue with the public through its open-door policy. Power was vested in the people alone and the more the consultation with the public, the fewer the mistakes made.

**Mr. T. Kivimägi** (Estonia), noting that parliaments were keepers and protectors of democracy said that democracy faced a crisis of confidence in the current time of turbulence. Its opponents were increasing, its supporters took it for granted, and governments were tested to resolve complex global issues. The core values of democracy and human rights must never be overlooked, even in cases where alternative forces promised easy solutions to those issues in disregard of the institutional and legal framework. Undemocratic governments used any means to advance their political aims, without consideration for life, as exemplified by the autocratic Belarusian regime in its deployment of human shields on the country's borders with Europe as part of its hybrid war against the EU. Such action was intolerable and should be resolutely condemned.

Active participation in elections was a cornerstone of democracy, yet a shift in perceptions was under way with reductions in voter turnout and decreasing trust in institutions and politicians. As pillars of democracy, parliaments must lead by example, especially during difficult times and also by including young people in their processes. In the most recent parliamentary and local elections in Estonia, some 45 per cent of votes cast in both cases had been electronic. Turnout would have been much lower without the e-voting system introduced two decades earlier, which encouraged youth engagement in the political process and was an illustration of inclusive democracy at work. Despite all difficulties, the gravitation towards democracy continued for the simple reason that democracy delivered human development, which was freedom.

**Ms. H. Järvinen** (Finland) said that it was saddening to see thousands of migrants, including children, being used as instruments in hybrid warfare and subjected to inhumane conditions on the border between Belarus and Poland. In a move orchestrated by the Lukashenko regime in response to sanctions imposed by the EU following the disputed Belarusian presidential elections, those migrants had been lured to Belarus and pushed further towards its borders with the EU. The aim of the operation, in which lives had been lost, was to destabilize the EU and divide its member States. Such actions anywhere were clearly unacceptable and must always be countered. Furthermore, the provision of humanitarian and medical aid to those in distress should not signal to human traffickers that their route for business was clear.

Representative democracy was the fertile ground where needs and aspirations were met, where people felt safe and where a better and fairer society for all would thrive, with human rights respected and voices heard. In a just society, people were willing to work hard for a flourishing society and the rest would follow. A key attribute of democracy was honest, direct and open-minded dialogue as a first step towards reconciling disagreements and grievances and as the foundation of good partnership and trust. By contrast, absence of dialogue would lead to assumptions, rumours and potentially dangerous misinterpretations. In the national interest, parliamentarians must always keep dialogue alive for the sake of lasting peace and prosperity.

**Mr. B. Rajić** (Slovenia) said that the crisis precipitated by COVID-19 had shed light on inequalities that had long pre-existed the pandemic. Democracy founded on human rights and the rule of law had no doubt itself been in crisis for some time, as reflected not only in populism and weakened trust in the political establishment but also in doubts around the concept and values of democracy. The difficult problem of increased polarization was strongly associated with social networks through which parliamentarians themselves were increasingly communicating. In so doing, they ensured transparency and provided information to the public. Vitally, however, they must remain committed to fostering a culture of dialogue online and setting a good example, given the role of such networks in spreading populism, fake news and hate speech. Parliament must remain respectful in exchanging views.

Parliamentarians in Slovenia took an oath to uphold the constitutional order, act on their own conscience and do their utmost for the national good. It might be time for parliamentarians to commit themselves by oath to acting in the best interests of the planet and future generations before the topics of current debate became irrelevant. Dominated instead by individual interests, the world was lurching from one disaster to the next. Solidarity and a sense of unity would help humanity to survive all such disasters, leading to a new normal that incorporated better ways of cooperating and living. The IPU should play an important role in that process.

**Mr. M.A. Rakotomalala** (Madagascar) said that rejection of the law of the strongest and of social hierarchy in favour of the principles of equality and freedom had given birth to the democratic ideal which still faced challenges to be overcome. Democracy was currently experiencing a crisis of representation that undermined the public's relationship with elected officials, as was sometimes manifested by mistrust or hostility towards them and indeed towards political institutions themselves. That crisis also engendered other situations harmful to democracy, such as the communitarianism that divided fellow citizens. The rapid transformation of countries such as Madagascar into modern States based on citizenship damaged the social fabric. State action was undermined and national cohesion weakened by the inclination to identify primarily with community or ethnic groups.

The first step towards strengthening cohesion was to ratify the core international and national human rights instruments, eliminate all forms of discrimination among citizens and establish the rule of law to guarantee the representation of all groups in institutions and the equal right of all to access public office. States must also work to improve socioeconomic conditions for the most vulnerable, while parliamentarians should promote egalitarian and interactive democratic multiculturalism – essential to any functioning democracy – and foster coexistence through education and communication. Particular attention should be devoted to the development of a national curriculum for culture and history. In Madagascar, for instance, the general history of Africa was taught using works by great African historians, which differed markedly in approach from those written by Western authors.

**Mr. A. Alahmad** (Palestine) said that dissemination of the values of democracy was an immense responsibility that fell to parliamentarians in their quest for, among other things, peace, sustainable development and well-being for all. Under Israeli occupation, the Palestinian people had for decades endured practices that deprived it of the most fundamental human right to security, stability and a decent life. It looked forward to an end to all such practices, which ranged from repression, killings and settler attacks to appropriation of land and natural resources. The Israeli occupying Power perpetually flouted agreements signed with the Palestinian side and disregarded human rights instruments and resolutions of international legitimacy, as if it were above international law and international humanitarian law. None of the relevant United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, amounting to hundreds in all, had been implemented which ran counter to justice, equality and international peace and security.

It was difficult to comprehend why States involved in drafting those resolutions, above all European States, recognized Israel but not Palestine, which had been a non-member observer State at the United Nations since 2012. The Palestinian people could no longer bear to wonder for how long resolutions dating back to as far as 1947 were to be ignored and for how long the occupation would persist, with its demolitions, blockades, detentions, racial discrimination and sowing of hatred. That situation of frustration, despair and hopelessness could not continue, just as the international community must no longer continue to shun its responsibility to turn words into action.



**Mr. B. Mahtab** (India) said that the formidable slew of challenges to democracy included terrorism, climate change and political polarization, and that mistrust, anger and lack of trust in political institutions were often fuelled by information that flowed uncontrollably through social media. His country's rich legacy of representative bodies dealing with matters of public importance through consultation and debate had been carried forward with the adoption of parliamentary democracy as the system most suited to the aspirations and needs of the people. Synonymous with India, that flourishing system had increased voter participation in elections conducted at regular intervals and heightened respect for rights, freedoms and divergent views. The executive was fully accountable to Parliament, the judiciary was thoroughly independent, and women and disadvantaged groups, including castes and tribes, were represented in the three-tiered system of governance in place countrywide. Women's socioeconomic and political participation was also promoted and protected by law.

A vast country with a diversity reflected in its array of faiths, cultures, traditions and languages, India was united as one through that diversity which strengthened and refurbished its democratic credentials. Parliament and state legislatures were the instruments for fulfilling the basic needs and aspirations of the people, with an emphasis on economic as well as political democracy. Parliament was an apex policymaking body tasked with formulating a vision of national development priorities and strategies. Parliamentary duties had, however, become manifold and included keeping abreast of global developments, a potentially onerous task helped, as with other duties and responsibilities, by the use of new information and communications technologies (ICTs).

**Ms. P. Cayetano** (Philippines), noting that long-lasting solutions must be found to challenges to democracy, said that, in monitoring her country's progress in sustainable development, a parliamentary committee had recognized through futures thinking that the current world was volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The resulting problems could be addressed through such thinking, using strategic foresight in place of near-sighted solutions. By way of that method, parliaments could make informed decisions that were good for the present and future.

In the Philippines, women's representation in public office could be improved, albeit that women had assumed the highest offices in the land and the percentage of women in Parliament was far above the Asian average. With the upcoming elections in mind, all citizens, especially youth, must be taught fact-checking to counter misinformation spread online and so encourage intelligent voting decisions. The quality of education for all must also be enhanced in the interest of better jobs, improved productivity and faster economic growth that brought long-term positive effects. The Philippines would be acting on the bold commitments it had made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including through more sustainable practices and green projects, and prioritizing spending on education and across the health sector to future-proof the system against emerging health threats. Budget hearings were among the parliamentary hearings to which all stakeholders were invited. In exercising their functions as public servants, parliamentarians must be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as by futures thinking and intergenerational fairness to reach groups that were traditionally left behind.

**Mr. S. Yang** (Cambodia) said that, against the backdrop of its prolonged civil war, Cambodia had simultaneously fought to prevent the return of the genocidal Pol Pot regime that had brought such tumult and destruction, and to rebuild the country from its ashes while under unjustly imposed sanctions. The constant warfare, however, had made nation-building impossible, ultimately prompting Cambodia to introduce in 1998 its "win-win policy". As a result, all factions had come together to achieve, for the first time in modern Cambodian history, national reconciliation, peace and unification. The hard-earned peace had brought opportunities for countrywide development that had transformed Cambodia into an attractive tourist destination amid a secure and harmonious society.

Previously a recipient of UN peacekeeping personnel, Cambodia now contributed troops to peacekeeping missions around the world. It was also a rice-exporting country and had become a lower middle-income country committed to attaining upper middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2050. Cambodia had always endeavoured to adhere strictly to the principle of multiparty liberal democracy by regularly conducting free, fair, just and transparent elections. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continued their long-standing role as partners for development across Cambodia where they had supported the efforts to manage the risk of COVID-19 through a vaccination campaign that had reached almost 90 per cent of the population, significantly reducing infections and deaths. Cambodia remained committed to strengthening close cooperation and constructive partnership with all relevant stakeholders to further promote and protect human rights, freedom and multiparty liberal democracy in the country.

**Mr. K. Kosachev** (Russian Federation) said that it was regrettable to see the platform provided by the IPU for a broad discussion of issues that should unite its Members being misused as a platform for fruitless arguments over matters that only States themselves could resolve. As to matters of common concern in the context of the current debate, it would be useful to share information on legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic and to discuss such issues as mandatory vaccination, the use of COVID-19 passes, and COVID-19-related support schemes. It would also be useful to exchange experiences of how parliaments had continued to function uninterrupted – or not – during the pandemic. The Russian Parliament, for instance, had cancelled none of its meetings and had enacted a whole series of laws relating to COVID-19. A further common concern that should be discussed was the acceptability of sanctions against parliamentarians, a case in point being the failure to issue visas in due time to members of certain delegations to the current Assembly, notably that of Belarus. He himself had been subjected to visa and other sanctions by the Governments of Canada, Ukraine and the United States for reasons unknown to him, as he had committed no crime. As a result, he had been barred from participating in various events. The IPU was the ideal platform for consolidating efforts to combat such sanctions, which was how democracy should work. His delegation looked forward to support from the IPU Members on the sanctions matter, as reflected in the draft resolution it had submitted in connection with its emergency item request.

**Mr. A.T. Correia** (Cabo Verde) said that the current disheartening state of democracy called for united efforts to reverse that situation in which authoritarianism was increasing, along with the number of backsliding democracies, which had reportedly doubled in the last decade. Other recent findings were that over two thirds of the global population lived in democracies in retreat or under autocratic regimes and that more countries had been transitioning to authoritarianism in 2020 than moving towards democracy, with democratic regimes lost through bitter elections or military coups. The global democratic crisis had been further aggravated by some of the introduced COVID-19 restrictions. New short-, medium- and long-term measures must be taken to safeguard and strengthen democracy, but it was first necessary to identify root causes of the decay, including by looking inward.

The level of political participation by women and youth could give rise to dissatisfaction if all the talk around it was merely lip service. Countries must also invest effectively in building sustainable and inclusive economic growth for peace and prosperity; inclusion was another important factor in creating respect for democratic principles and values. In Cabo Verde, democracy, freedom and human rights were protected as inalienable assets for socioeconomic development as well as for inclusion, cohesion and national unity. Free and fair municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections had been conducted in 2020, the pandemic notwithstanding, followed by a peaceful transition of power. Free votes were always preferable to bullets, political dialogue and understanding to conflict, truth to populism, and transparency and good governance to corruption.

**Ms. M.I. Valente** (Angola) said that the many challenges for democracy, which included widening economic and structural inequalities, decreasing trust in political system and growing waves of migrants and refugees, had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addressing those challenges, parliamentarians must build on the IPU's commendable and impactful work to create more inclusive societies by involving women, youth and all other groups in political decision-making. To that end, they must legislate for inclusive and sustainable policies and approve budgets conducive to stability and a fairer distribution of wealth. The attainment of such objectives necessitated ongoing consultation with government and civil society, in addition to within and among parliaments, to reach common ground.

It was nonetheless persistent disagreement over the whys and hows in that process that had encouraged political polarization, harming in turn the culture of tolerance, increasing distrust and undermining the effectiveness and credibility of parliaments, in some cases to the point of dysfunction.

Equally relevant was the fact that parliaments were generally composed of groups of political parties that included duly elected deputies put forward as candidates by those parties. Deep division, whether ideological or subjective, was often the result. Another factor to consider was that the relationship between ethics and policy was underpinned by the relationship between the individual and community. Urgent steps must therefore be taken to promote civic education in view of the vital role it had to play in developing the democratic spirit and fostering solidarity.

**Mr. S. Gkikas** (Greece), referring to earlier comments about events in the Aegean Sea, said that every State had a self-evident obligation to safeguard and secure its borders. The Greek authorities operated in full compliance with international and European law, as well as with the rules of engagement at sea, and had consistently demonstrated their commitment to applying international law at all times. Turkey, on the other hand, had failed to respect its commitment to the EU concerning refugees; on the contrary, it pursued the illegal entry of refugees and migrants to Greece. As visual evidence showed, the Turkish coastguard clearly escorted migrants to the sea border, without regard for their safety. Since 2015, Greece had rescued 250,000 refugees and migrants in 5,500 incidents.

As to contemporary challenges to democracy, they differed on the basis of historical, social, and other factors. In Greece, its financial crisis had created growing discontent over social injustice and austerity measures. The peak of that crisis, in 2015, had coincided with the European migration crisis in a lethal combination that had favoured the rise of ultraright and ultraleft populist movements, deepening divisions and threatening democracy. In Greece, the ultraright Golden Dawn had become the third most powerful party, a development illustrative of the danger of discontent, distrust and social division. The Greek example pointed to the need for immediate countermeasures in such crises but also showed that they could be overcome by strong and stable democratic institutions and practices. The best way to protect social cohesion, promote community rebuilding and enhance democratic practices was to address inequity, inequality, social division and poverty by strengthening those institutions.

**Mr. J.I. Echániz** (Spain) said that it was always necessary to defend democracy, human rights and freedom, as there were generally no lasting guarantees that they would not at some point become threatened. Unless tackled, the challenges currently facing all countries would set back progress made towards addressing the gaps in society. It would increase distrust of political systems and institutions – and indeed of politicians – and breed populism and social divides that rode roughshod over tolerance, dialogue and efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully and find common ground for agreement. Rising political polarization had an adverse impact on the efficiency and credibility of parliaments and on their ability to forge solutions and drive forward plans for development. As highlighted in the instance of COVID-19, another risk to democratic values and harmonious progress was posed by the harnessing of new technologies to disseminate fake news and misinformation liable to stoke frustration and rage.

To resolve existing challenges, it would be necessary to enhance participatory mechanisms, promote civic education and strengthen cooperation and solidarity with a view to concerted national, regional and international action to safeguard democracy. It was also essential to encourage tolerance and dialogue to increase inclusion and overcome differences. Lastly, representative institutions must pursue evidence-based decision-making and seek to bolster their own relevance and efficiency. In all those spheres, going forward, parliaments would be well served by the IPU's work and new strategic objectives as guidance.

In conclusion, he thanked the members of all delegations for attending the Assembly in his country and hoped that the best efforts of the Spanish authorities to organize the event had proved fit for purpose.

**The President** expressed the IPU's gratitude to the Spanish Congress of Deputies for its generous hospitality and excellent hosting of the event.

**Mr. S. Gkikas** (Greece), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation denied the accusations levelled against Greece, which acted in accordance with the law and the rules of engagement at sea. The Turkish delegation had no right to make such accusations, bearing in mind that Turkey had manipulated the tragedy of the Evros river incident in 2020 to push refugees across the border into Greece with the aim of destabilizing the country and the EU. Greece was entitled to protect its borders.

**Ms. R. Kavakci Kan** (Turkey), also speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that all countries were indeed so entitled but that no further lives must be lost in the process. Everyone had the right to life and refugees should be free to flee for theirs. The incident referred to earlier by her delegation had been reported in the Greek press which had printed an open letter sent on the matter by Samos residents to the country's Prime Minister. The letter and related video were available for all to see. The accusation made against Turkey was furthermore untrue. No one had the right to criticize Turkey; it had been hosting some 4.5 million individuals on humanitarian grounds since the start of the Syrian crisis and its counterparts in the EU knew well who had not been keeping their side of the bargain.

*The sitting rose at 13:20.*

## Sitting of Sunday 28 November

### Item 3 of the agenda

#### **General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community***

##### *Resumption of the debate*

*The sitting was called to order at 14:50 with Ms. M. Guerra (Mexico) in the Chair.*

**Mr. K.B. Abdullahi** (Nigeria) said that democracy had largely been equated with the need to guarantee high levels of citizen participation. The different sections of the population must be accommodated to promote a sense of belonging and harmony as well as to ensure peace, growth and development.

Democracy was also about dialogue, debate, consensus, trust and understanding although it did not always work out that way. Indeed, the world was currently experiencing a great deal of polarization which posed a significant challenge to democracy. Polarization could be addressed through short- and long-term measures. Short-term measures included promoting diversity and adequate leadership. Long-term measures included putting in place services and infrastructure with a view to achieving tangible growth and development.

Efficient communication between citizens and the government was needed. It was not possible to have democracy without freedom of expression. Citizens must therefore be given opportunities to relate their concerns to their parliamentary representatives. In modern times, channels of communication had expanded beyond the traditional offline world into the newer online world which had helped to bolster democracy. However, citizens should be mindful of their basic social responsibilities, such as not spreading disinformation. A successful democracy was also one where parliament had the ability to find common ground in the context of many diverging points of view.

There was a need to ensure a wholesome democratic culture where all parts of the population were included, especially vulnerable people such as women, youth and people living with disabilities. The time had come for parliaments to implement their commitments and design strategies to effect sustainable development.

**Mr. B.G. Tunkara** (The Gambia) said that parliamentary action was needed to galvanize democracy around the world. Democracy was not perfect and did not always deliver on the diverse interests of society. It was constantly a work in progress. Parliaments must wield their legislative powers to create a structured rather than restricted democracy, for instance, by applying gender and youth quotas. States had a duty to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights, including economic, sociocultural, civil and political rights.

The Parliament of the Gambia was fully committed to upholding democracy using a rights-based approach that put people at the centre. It had stood by its government in guaranteeing effective representation and equal opportunities for all. Parliament had recently passed several democratic laws, including the Gambia Women Enterprise Fund Bill, the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill and the Persons with Disabilities Bill. It was also in the process of setting up a women's caucus.

The year 2017 had marked a new beginning for the Gambia when President Adama Barrow had taken office. The President had been elected at a challenging time but had introduced many positive reforms. In particular, he had removed many of the egregious practices of the former government and overseen the adoption of a transitional justice system, including the establishment of a truth, reconciliation and reparations commission and a national human rights commission. Many Gambians reported feeling freer under the current regime than under the previous one. The country was expected to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in the near future which would be closely contested given the high level of political freedom and awareness held by the electorate.

**Mr. A. Dichter** (Israel) said that the IPU must address two challenges to improve quality of life and save lives around the world, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and terrorism.

It was important for countries to be transparent about data related to the pandemic. Sharing data about case numbers or the effectiveness of vaccines and drugs would be a powerful way to overcome the virus. More should be done to reduce the COVID-19 death toll. Israel had been relatively successful in its battle against COVID-19 having kept its death toll to 0.6 per cent compared to 2 per cent globally. It would be happy to share its experience with other countries. Vaccines must be made available everywhere in the world.

International cooperation was required to combat the “virus” of terrorism. Terrorism harmed democracies and non-democracies alike although its roots lay in non-democratic countries. There was no doubt that Iran had become the world’s leading State sponsor of terrorism. The weekly rocket fire from Yemen to Saudi Arabia was planned in Iran. The terrorist attacks carried out by Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement against Israel were funded and directed by Iran. Iran was also on its way to producing nuclear weapons. In addition to Iran, the Palestinian authorities were encouraging terrorism by paying salaries to its parliamentarians who had been imprisoned for terrorism in Israeli jails. The IPU must prevent such things from happening. The only way to fight terrorism in an effective and determined manner was to adopt the stance that every terrorist was, first and foremost, a terrorist regardless of whether they were also a parliamentarian. By addressing the two abovementioned challenges, the IPU would be helping to create a safer and healthier world.

**Mr. A. Gajadien** (Suriname) underlined the importance of promoting a culture of cooperation and dialogue amidst eroding public trust in political systems, growing polarization and the spread of disinformation on social media.

There were many reasons for polarization, including socioeconomic differences and discrimination. Polarization could be prevented, for instance, by improving socioeconomic conditions and offering equal opportunities to all.

Political parties had an important role to play in stimulating discussions among different sectors of society. There was also a need to build consultation platforms for citizens, particularly within existing structures, such as district councils.

Parliaments should listen and respond to the demands of society. They must strengthen their relations with other parliaments through exchange programmes and conferences. Overall, parliamentarians must fulfil their roles as representatives of the people working in line with national and international rules.

Suriname was a multiethnic and multicultural society which could be a model for other countries. Currently, Parliament was working on several laws, including a law on violence and sexual harassment at work and a law on equal treatment in employment. A law on the collective rights of indigenous and tribal peoples had also been tabled. Suriname had committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and was well on its way to achieving them.

The parliaments of developing countries were facing many financial and economic difficulties. Fighting corruption and ensuring access to concessional financing should be of critical importance to the IPU.

**Mr. K. M. Karidio** (Niger) said that the level of dysfunction in many political institutions was alarming. There was a crisis of governance and economic development, unequal distribution of wealth, and growing numbers of terrorist attacks and wars around the world. Certain groups had been completely excluded from society, including women, young people and people with disabilities. Large gaps also existed between intellectual and political elites, between the rich and the poor, and between low-income and high-income nations. International organizations had failed to foster good relations among States.

With that in mind, many citizens felt disconnected from political life and had lost faith in the system. Many were even sceptical of science, including the COVID-19 vaccines. A return to social and political dialogue was needed. Parliamentarians must start listening to all its citizens, not just a select few. They should design programmes and projects in conjunction with the population. There was also a need to consider reducing the number of mandates that parliamentarians could serve in parliament. Humanity was in poor condition. Countries must rethink politics and create a new world order based on brotherly relations.

**Mr. B. Sandag** (Mongolia) said that it had been 30 years since Mongolia had chosen parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary democracy was a type of governance which handed the reins over to the people. It was the best solution for building a truly civil society.

The Constitution of Mongolia gave people the right to participate directly in the affairs of the State and to exercise that right through the elected representative bodies. Those rights had also been reflected in national laws, including the Law on the State Great Hural of Mongolia and the Law on Public Hearings. However, research had shown that laws had not been enough to increase citizens’ participation in legislative and decision-making processes. The reasons were threefold. First, procedures did not exist to enforce the right to public participation. Second, accountability on the matter was lacking. Third, there was an absence of platforms for public participation as well as a lack of public awareness.

Mongolia had taken a number of measures to address the above gaps. For example, it had set up various electronic platforms for citizens to vote on draft laws and established an e-petitions system for receiving citizens' requests. A law on oversight duty had also been passed which established accountability mechanisms and laid out procedural norms for ensuring public participation in parliament.

**Ms. M. Vasilevich** (Belarus) said that Belarus had never been a source of instability. However, it was currently experiencing an increased flow of migrants from conflict-affected countries who were crossing its territory on their way to the European Union (EU). Belarus continued to work towards regional security and border protection despite the sanctions-driven decision of the EU to terminate cooperation on international technical assistance projects.

Belarus had nothing to do with the emergence of the crisis and had nothing to hide. The country was completely open to cooperation with interested international agencies and had already facilitated visits. For instance, in November 2021, two World Health Organization (WHO) delegations, amongst others, had visited the border zone and logistics centre which housed refugees and migrants. There was no similar openness on the part of Poland. Poland was systematically violating the human rights of asylum seekers and did not want the world to know. The migrant crisis had revealed the dark side of the EU: politicians who declared values while building fences and supporting migrant pushbacks.

It was astonishing to hear EU countries accuse Belarus of refusing humanitarian aid to refugees. Belarus had established an effective channel for the collection, delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid to people on the border through the Belarusian Red Cross. The EU was trying to create a negative image of Belarus and mislead the world about the real state of affairs in the country.

There was a need to quickly identify steps to relocate refugees to countries where they wished to seek asylum as well as to help them to reunite with their families. A solution to the migration crisis could only be found through dialogue and cooperation.

*The General Debate was adjourned.*

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, drew attention to the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign. The presence of youth in parliament was very important. Young people had a great deal of energy and an openness to change that was essential to democracy. Their participation created stronger and more inclusive societies. The world was facing many challenges that would affect the lives of the next generations. Young people must therefore have a say in the decisions. He wished to personally commit to the campaign.

**Ms. S. Albazar** (Egypt), President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, in a video message, said that, in the last 10 years, the IPU had made great efforts to empower young people. It had set up the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, collected concrete data on youth in parliament, drafted policy guidance on youth participation and developed empowering trainings for young parliamentarians. The infrastructure was there but the political will was lacking. The campaign was about mobilizing political will. She called on delegates to support the campaign.

**Mr. M. Bouva** (Suriname), former President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, said that youth around the world were facing many challenges both nationally and internationally. Everyone must work together to find solutions regardless of age or gender. He invited delegates to say yes to youth in parliament.

*A video about the "I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!" campaign was played.*

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that the campaign was not just for young parliamentarians but for parliamentarians of all ages. It was possible to bring about change if all parliamentarians worked together. He called on delegates to support the campaign.

**Ms. B. Argimón** (Uruguay), speaking via video link, said that her Parliament wished to support the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign. Young people had an essential contribution to make in parliamentary work and should be given a chance to express themselves. Democracy was of a higher quality when young people were able to participate.

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that it was a pleasure to see such experienced Speakers of Parliament as Ms. Argimón, who were so committed to the campaign. The campaign would continue running until more young people were represented in parliament.

Next, the IPU would launch a new publication developed in conjunction with UN Women, namely the Handbook for Parliamentarians entitled *Gender-responsive law-making*.

*A video about the Handbook was played.*

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that women globally enjoyed two thirds of the legal rights of men which was a statistic that was impossible to accept. Although equality on paper was not enough, it was the first step. The law sent a signal about what was acceptable in society and what was not. It provided a basis to implement pro-equality measures, including ways to promote equal access to leadership positions and educational opportunities. The law could also protect against gender-based violence and abuse. It was for that reason that the IPU had developed a tool together with UN Women to support parliaments in their efforts to legislate in a gender-responsive way. Societies that were more equal were more resilient, more developed and more peaceful. He urged delegates to implement the recommendations contained in the Handbook.

**Ms. A. Regnér** (Deputy Executive Director, UN Women) said that the legislative power of parliamentarians was key to unlocking the full potential of women and girls. Gaps in the law as well as laws which discriminated against women and girls entrenched and perpetuated gender inequality. According to most recent estimates, 3.7 billion women and girls were currently living in countries where discriminatory laws were in place or where key protections were lacking. Addressing inequality before the law required a multistakeholder effort. As a result, UN Women was working with the IPU and other partners on the implementation of its strategy, *Equality in law for women and girls by 2030: A multistakeholder strategy for accelerated action*. The Handbook on gender-responsive law-making was an important part of that joint effort.

The Handbook recognized the urgent role that all parliamentarians must play in promoting gender-responsive laws and was intended to be of use to all parliaments who wished to make the necessary reforms. She called on parliamentarians to adopt appropriate laws, policies and budget allocations. In the past ten years, UN Women had provided expert knowledge and technical support to governments in almost 90 countries and had impacted an estimated 3 billion women and girls. All of those successes had been achieved in close partnership with parliamentarians. The Handbook afforded a new opportunity to carry the work forward even further.

**Ms. L. Vasylenko** (Ukraine), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, said that gender inequalities persisted in the twenty-first century. They existed in many different shapes and forms and had become even more apparent during the pandemic. For example, women had been at the forefront of the health response but were being paid less and tended to occupy jobs of a lower status than men. Women did the largest share of unpaid care work, which had been on the rise during the pandemic. They did not, however, receive due recognition for it. Incidents of domestic violence against women and girls had also been growing during the pandemic.

The above trends showed the fragility of the legal and policy frameworks that were in place. More must be done to reform legislation in essential areas such as inheritance of nationality and elimination of violence against women and girls.

It was not easy to make legal reforms, particularly when they challenged the status quo. It would require countries to build alliances both within parliaments and beyond, between men and women, between the majority and the opposition, as well as between government, parliament and civil society.

**The Secretary General** said that the Handbook was part of a strategy developed by UN Women in cooperation with the IPU and other stakeholders to ensure equality in the law by 2030. The Handbook was built on existing commitments but also on realities experienced on the ground in a multitude of national contexts. It had been designed in close consultation with parliamentarians from across the globe. The Handbook stressed that it was not enough to just pass legislation. Many good laws were lagging behind in implementation because they were not well understood or known. In addition, those tasked with enforcing the laws often did not have the necessary human or financial resources. It was his strong belief that parliaments and parliamentarians had a key role to play in disseminating laws and directing resources towards implementing them. Parliament itself must have the necessary mechanisms and structures in place to advance the agenda. As outlined in the Handbook, a holistic approach was needed to achieve full equality by 2030. UN Women and the IPU stood ready to support parliaments that committed to implementing the recommendations contained in the Handbook.

*The Handbook was officially launched.*



**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, drew attention to a joint study undertaken by the IPU and the African Parliamentary Union (APU) on sexism, harassment and violence against women in Africa.

**The Secretary General** said that one of the major goals of the IPU was to achieve the full and effective participation of women in politics. Another ambition was to transform all parliaments into gender-sensitive institutions and workplaces where women could fulfil their duties safely and on an equal footing with men. One of the most devastating obstacles to the latter ambition was sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament. Previously, there had been no data to assess the nature and extent of the problem. As a result, the IPU had conducted a global study on the topic in 2016 and its first regional study covering parliaments in Europe in 2018. Both studies had revealed that sexism, harassment and violence against women happened in parliaments worldwide. A third study would be launched at the present Assembly which intended to shed light on the situation in Africa. Data for the African study were collected through confidential interviews with 224 serving women parliamentarians and female parliamentary staff in 50 countries and 50 parliaments in Africa. Interviews had been conducted with three women parliamentarians from each of the 50 parliaments concerned in order to make the survey as representative as possible. The study revealed a reality that parliaments could not ignore.

**Ms. A.D. Mergane Kanouté** (Senegal), Vice-President of the Executive Committee, said that the study sought to break the silence and the persistent taboos surrounding violence against women in parliaments. Violence denied women the opportunity to have a political life and put their skills and competences into question for the sole reason of being women.

Eighty per cent of women parliamentarians who had taken part in the study had experienced psychological violence during their mandate. Sixty-seven per cent had been subject to sexist remarks or behaviours. Forty-two per cent had received death threats, rape threats, threats of beating or abduction. Forty per cent had been sexually harassed and twenty-three per cent had experienced physical violence. Participants reported that most acts of violence had been committed by male parliamentarians mainly from other political parties but also from their own. Forty-two per cent of online sexual harassment was attributed to members of the public or to anonymous people. Thirty per cent of cases of intimidation had also been perpetrated by members of the public, particularly during electoral periods.

Women parliamentarians living with disabilities, or who were under 40, unmarried or were from minority groups faced a greater level of violence. Women parliamentarians who belonged to the political opposition or who positioned themselves in favour of women's rights were also more vulnerable.

The study had shown that acts of violence were rarely reported. Most parliaments did not even have a mechanism in place to allow women to raise their voice in safety. The problem impacted everyone, men and women alike. It was the duty of parliamentarians to put an end to the sad reality facing women in politics today.

**Ms. L. Vasylenko** (Ukraine), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, said that sexism, harassment and violence against women in politics was not only a problem in Africa but a worldwide problem. The percentages of psychological violence against women in parliament were similar across the three studies. Europe had a slightly higher percentage due to a higher rate of online attacks recorded (58% in Europe compared to 46% in Africa). The numbers could be explained by differences in access to internet between the two regions.

The level of physical and economic violence uncovered by the African study was similar to the global study. Sexual violence, however, was considerably higher in Africa than in Europe or in the rest of the world. It could be partly explained by the political, social, cultural and religious contexts facing women parliamentarians in Africa.

Sexism, harassment and violence against women were unacceptable regardless of the differences between regions and were definitely not part of the job of being a parliamentarian. Eliminating sexism and gender-based violence must be a primary concern for all parliaments, including parliamentarians, secretaries general and administrative staff.

**Mr. B. Idi Gado** (Secretary General, African Parliamentary Union (APU)) said that the study was an indication of the excellent collaboration that existed between the IPU and the APU. He was very concerned by the alarming results of the study. It was particularly worrying that the main perpetrators of violence against women in African parliaments were male parliamentarians and that most acts of violence had taken place within the parliaments themselves. African parliaments must take urgent action to fight against sexism, harassment and violence against women.

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, called on all parliaments to apply zero tolerance to all forms of violence against women in parliament. It was something that was impossible to accept. The study contained practical measures which should be implemented in all parliaments. It was important to work together to create a fair and inclusive parliamentary environment free of violence as well as to promote greater participation of women in the democratic process. The matter concerned everyone: men, women and society as a whole.

*The study was officially launched.*

*The General Debate was resumed.*

*Ms. E. Abdulla (Maldives) took the Chair.*

**Mr. M.A. Alajlani** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that there were many challenges facing democracy, such as polarization and fake news. Countries could improve democracy by raising awareness among the population about political developments and by fostering freedom of expression.

Syria had suffered a great deal in recent years as a result of war and terrorism. It had suffered at the hands of the Israeli forces and been the target of attacks carried out by terrorist groups. It had been subject to an illegal Turkish occupation as well as to occupations by other armies. There was also a blockade against Syria which violated the human rights of the people and hindered the economy. Still, Syria was finding the courage to recover and was trying hard to establish peace and stability. The country wished to have good relations with the international community and was open to engaging with any interested party.

**Mr. A. Neofytou** (Cyprus) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a profound impact on democracy. It had caused problems for the multilateral system, curbed personal freedoms, put into question the reliability of information and diminished the ability of democratic institutions to cope with rapidly changing societal demands.

The international community was also facing other challenges to democracy. The financial crisis had led to growing public discontent over inequalities, worsening living standards and social injustice. Migration and refugee flows were at a high level as a result of the Syrian civil war. The world had also witnessed rapid technological advancements, particularly the growth of social media, which had boosted opportunities for citizen engagement but also contributed to the spread of fake news.

There was no simple solution to any of the above challenges. However, the IPU must rise to its mission and defend its fundamental values and principles. Political determination and solidarity were needed to renew and safeguard democracy. Concerted efforts at both the national and international levels would lay the foundations towards a better future for every citizen around the globe.

**Mr. E. Mulembwe** (Mozambique) said that democracy was about promoting individual freedoms and creating equality of conditions. It meant upholding government for all and creating government for the people. Democracy was vital to the running of societies and was needed to maintain order, especially in exceptional circumstances. Climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and terrorism were all threats to democracy.

He hoped that the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention to Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Glasgow would mark a new beginning in the way humans interacted with the environment. He also hoped to see the end of the COVID-19 pandemic which had caused many negative impacts on the democratic lives of the population.

Terrorism had greatly affected Mozambique, particularly the Cabo Delgado province, where 800,000 people had been displaced and 2,000 people had died. Public and private infrastructure had also been destroyed, preventing citizens from exercising their civic rights. The situation was, however, improving thanks to the efforts of the Mozambique defence and security forces and their counterparts from Rwanda and the South African Development Community.

He called on delegates to support Mozambique's candidacy to be a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the term 2023–2024.

**Mr. A. Nikzad Samarin** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that parliaments were the epitome of democracy, providing a platform for citizens to voice their opinions and thoughts. The Iranian Parliament was the longest standing example of authentic democratic governance in West Asia.

The greatest aspiration of the nations of West Asia was to live free from the interference of foreign powers. External interference, particularly by the United States of America, had caused great suffering to the region, including terrorism, occupation, the development of weapons of mass destruction and blatant violations of human rights. Some of the ways in which the United States had violated the principles of diplomacy included: supporting Israel's targeted assassinations of Iranian citizens, building alliances against Iran, fuelling Iranophobia with the intention of destroying neighbourly relations, and violating the nuclear deal. In addition, by imposing inhumane sanctions against Iran, the United States had negatively affected the livelihoods, welfare and health of the Iranian people. The United States was using the guise of democracy to humiliate other nations and entrench American hegemony around the world.

The Palestinian ordeal remained the longest standing example of Western hypocrisy. Israel continued to display aggression against Palestinians and to build settlements on Palestinian territory. Its behaviour was a blatant violation of UN resolutions and an outright denial of all Palestinian rights. Yet, the United States and other like-minded countries continued to encourage them, thus demonstrating a complete disregard for the fundamental values of democracy.

Democracy required the equal participation of all nations in international and regional interactions. It was the only way to achieve peace, stability and sustainable development.

**Mr. M.A. Al-Shadadi** (Yemen) said that technological developments, especially social media, had given people worldwide more opportunities to participate in political life. However, it had also led to an increase in polarization. It was of utmost importance to guarantee equal opportunities for women and youth, combat corruption and achieve equality before the law. Implementing social justice was also important to end all forms of discrimination.

Yemen had been embroiled in a violent war for the past seven years. He called on the international community to continue supporting Yemen in its fight against the Houthi militias who were backed by Iran.

The Houthi militias had executed 47 parliamentarians and their families, among them women and children, and destroyed the houses of others. The Speaker and the two Vice-Speakers had also been attacked. The militias were spreading fake news and threats on social media and were using ballistic weapons and drones to perpetrate terrorist attacks, including against the President. Many people had been forced to flee the country because of a lack of basic services, such as food. Thousands of students had also been deprived of their education with many educators being forced to find other jobs because of cuts to their salaries. Yemen had a weak health system resulting from years of war and had therefore had a high mortality rate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Militias had been refusing vaccines and other humanitarian aid during the pandemic.

**Mr. A. Al Nuaimi** (United Arab Emirates) said that parliaments had a duty to consolidate a culture of tolerance, openness and peace among all communities. Cultural and religious arrogance were the real causes of terrorism and extremism which were two of the biggest threats to social cohesion.

The United Arab Emirates had set out a strategic pathway for the next 50 years in its document entitled Principles of 50. The aim of the pathway was to eliminate hatred, rancour and division by promoting justice, peace, stability, human fraternity and tolerance, all of which were essential to overcoming contemporary challenges to democracy. As part of the pathway, the country hoped to deliver international emergency aid to all those in need regardless of race, ethnicity, political affiliation or religion.

There would be no future for democracy without addressing climate change. He hoped that COP28, which would be held in the United Arab Emirates, would move humanity forward in that regard.

It was of utmost importance to prioritize cyber security. The United Arab Emirates had passed many laws on cyber security and was fighting to put an end to hate speech.

**Mr. Ha Vu Hai** (Viet Nam) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had caused immense losses in people, exacerbated divisiveness and widened inequalities among nations. Peace, stability and sustainable development had suffered as a result.

It was important to regain the trust of the people. To do so, parliaments should strengthen their legal systems and renew their policies in line with socioeconomic commitments. They should exercise their oversight role to ensure that policies responded to people's needs. They should mobilize resources for sustainable development. Overall, people should be placed at the centre of all parliamentary work.

A number of measures should be taken to address contemporary challenges to democracy. First, it was important to strengthen peace, security and stability at all levels, uphold the rule of law, respect international law, promote dialogue and trust, and find peaceful resolutions to urgent challenges. Second, parliaments should bolster technological cooperation to increase people's engagement in the work of the State. Third, there was a need to make good laws and exercise oversight over policy implementation. A people-centred approach was needed in that regard focusing on gender equality as well as on children, elderly people and people with disabilities. Fourth, parliaments should support parliamentary diplomacy, including the mission of the IPU. Fifth, further collaboration was needed between the IPU, the United Nations, regional parliamentary organizations and Member Parliaments on issues such as trade, investment, security and climate change.

**Ms. E. Nyirasafari** (Rwanda) said that democracy had come up against many challenges which must be addressed in a comprehensive and harmonious manner. Parliaments must promote a culture of cooperation to overcome societal divides and build inclusive communities. Citizens should be involved in matters concerning their wellbeing and be able to hold their leaders accountable.

In the past, Rwanda had suffered greatly from divisionism which had ultimately led to the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994. Since then, Rwanda had committed to building a State based on consensual and pluralistic democracy founded on power sharing, national unity, reconciliation, tolerance and dialogue. Among the measures taken was the establishment of the National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations which brought together political parties to build consensus and promote national cohesion. The country had also set up a new ministry in charge of national unity and civic engagement which sought to develop policies and strategies to heal the wounds of the past.

The Parliament of Rwanda was representative of all sectors of the population, including women, youth and people with disabilities. It played an active role in holding the government accountable for its commitments. Parliaments must enact laws that guaranteed freedom of press, freedom of expression and freedom of information but should also ensure that such freedoms did not prejudice public order and preserved the dignity and privacy of every citizen.

The global community must come together to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines were available to all. No one was safe without equal distribution of vaccines.

**Ms. M.Y. Ferrer Gómez** (Cuba) said that the challenges facing democracy were many and various causing citizens to lose faith in political systems. Challenges included exclusion, corruption, abuse of power and social injustice. It was important to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in parliament, such as women and youth. Citizens must be able to participate in elections but also to stand. Indeed, the nomination of candidates must cease to be the exclusive monopoly of political parties and instead become a right available to all. There was a need to improve accountability, promote the right to revoke and create greater links with the population. The Cuban model of democracy was based on all the above principles and aimed to give sovereignty to the people.

The UN General Assembly had repeatedly demanded an end to the economic embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States. The United States had ignored those demands and in fact strengthened the embargo. The embargo aimed to break the Cuban people but would not succeed. External interference in the internal affairs of States had nothing to do with democracy. Democracy in developing countries would remain fragile as long as colonialist practices existed.

She reiterated the need for a legally binding instrument to regulate the use of digital technologies. The instrument should place greater responsibility on large corporations and ensure that information and communication technology (ICT) could only be used for peaceful purposes.

There was an urgent need to construct a more just, inclusive, equitable and harmonious international order. The new order should be based on respect for international law and on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, such as the sovereign equality of States, peaceful settlement of disputes and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States. Every State had a right to build its own political system, free from threats, aggression and coercive unilateral measures.

**Mr. J.A. Coloma** (Chile) said that the world was experiencing a political crisis which was most evident in the lack of trust that citizens had in their institutions. It was the responsibility of parliaments to understand the causes of the crisis and win the trust back. The lack of trust stemmed from a big gap that existed between the electorate and the elected representatives. Factors contributing to the problem included populism, polarization, ideological differences, a break down in social consensus and a failure to satisfy the demands of citizens. However, the most significant issue of all was the absence of truth. Indeed, people were able to spread misinformation and distort the facts, particularly on social media, without facing political, criminal or social sanctions. It was very problematic given that 70 per cent of voters made political choices based on what they saw on social media. There was a vital need to recover the truth. Global agreements were needed in addition to national legislation to regulate digital platforms. Chile had already begun legislating on the matter and encouraged others to do the same. The IPU should take the lead on the above issues. It was a gigantic task but a matter of life and death for democracy.

**Ms. O. Rudenko** (Ukraine) said that democracy was facing many new challenges which had resulted in diminished trust in political systems. Technological development, including the ever-growing use of social media, was one of those challenges. While new technologies allowed for greater connections, they had also led to division and polarization. The pandemic had been a further test of democratic values, leading to hatred, intolerance, mutual distrust and greater social inequality. The situation had left many people susceptible to populist propaganda which offered simple solutions to difficult issues.

Parliamentarians must be on the frontline guarding democratic values both nationally and internationally. It was important to speak to people directly and take their concerns seriously. A balance must also be found between encouraging freedom of speech and limiting the flow of disinformation online.

Ukraine was working to ensure that its Parliament represented all groups of society, including women and young people. It had also improved its legislation and policies on COVID-19 and exchanged practices with international partners.

She wished to remind the delegate from the Russian Federation why sanctions had been imposed on her country. Russia had annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, as confirmed in UN General Assembly resolution 68/262, and continued to use aggression in Eastern Ukraine where it had setup a torture prison.

**Mr. G. Daudze** (Latvia) said that the world had recently celebrated International Tolerance Day which aimed to strengthen tolerance by promoting mutual understanding between cultures and peoples. Tolerance was about adopting fair, objective, and permissive attitudes toward the opinions, beliefs, practices, cultures, and origins that differed from one's own. The world needed more tolerance than ever before.

In recent decades, the world had been shaken by many challenges, including climate change, population growth, food insecurity, intolerance, unequal access to medicine, the arms race, migration, gender inequality and misinformation. The latest challenge was the pandemic which had infected large numbers of people and disrupted global trade. All the above challenges were a threat to democracy. Parliamentarians must be at the forefront of efforts to address the challenges, providing stable and long-lasting solutions.

Science should play a more important role in diplomacy since it was based on an analysis of the facts rather than on feelings, interpretations or culture and could therefore help to strengthen democracy. It was important to make concessions to move forward as well as to embrace diversity.

**Ms. H. Baldwin** (United Kingdom) said that democracy was the best way to achieve progress for humanity. It was, however, facing contemporary challenges everywhere. The first key test for democracy was that every vote must count. Everyone who was eligible must be able to vote, stand as a candidate and hear from a range of candidates. All candidates must be free to express themselves and campaign for their beliefs without internal repression or interference from external actors. The second key test for democracy was that any election or referendum must give citizens the chance to change the government or the constitution. An electoral system that did not allow citizens to vote for change would never elect a government that could respond properly to citizens. The third key test for democracy was that the losers must respect the outcome of the election and ensure a peaceful transition of power.

Over the past year, particularly during the pandemic, democracy had been tested in all of the above ways. The United Kingdom had skipped local elections because of the pandemic, handing a free term of government to many councillors and mayors. There were also many stories of voter suppression where false stories had been placed online targeting those whose voices were needed the most. Furthermore, in January 2021, the world had witnessed how the incumbent President of the United States had refused to accept the outcome of an election and had stood by as a mob had stormed Congress.

Citizens were not free without democracy. The law must come from democratically elected politicians to ensure it had the consent of the people.

**Ms. C. Urbano de Sousa** (Portugal) said that the Global State of Democracy Report 2021 had revealed that the number of countries suffering from democratic erosion had doubled in the past ten years with more and more moving towards authoritarianism. There was a growing number of countries where elections had not been carried out in total freedom or where military coups were taking place with a view to bringing down democratically elected regimes.

Democracy was facing major challenges, some of which were long-standing while others were more recent. One of the more recent challenges was the manipulation of public opinion through fake news on social media. The pandemic had also aggravated the crisis of democracy. It was important to ensure that democracy lived on and to fight for it every day. Democracy was still alive in many civic activist movements. The mission of the IPU was to promote democracy but also to support all defenders of democracy who were at risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the importance of solidarity and joint action. The world had come a long way but had more work to do with many countries still waiting for vaccines. It was important to resist the selfish instinct for self-preservation, come together as a global community and ensure that no one was left behind. Countries could at times disagree but ultimately had the same goals: to live in peace and safety, be in good health, ensure respect for human dignity, and have democracy and freedom. They were also dealing with the same concerns, including sustainability and climate change. The ultimate goal should therefore be unity.

**Mr. L. Bugli** (San Marino) said that San Marino, as one of the oldest democracies in the world, had always been a symbol of democracy and freedom. In its institutional system, the people elected a parliament every six years which was made up of 60 parliamentarians. Two Heads of State presided over the three branches of power: the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. San Marino also had a system of direct democracy in place under which citizens could present a motion every six months.

The perfect democracy did not exist. There must therefore be a continuous effort to nurture it. A democratic system was not fed by force or by coercion but by belief and a common pursuit of public interest. Every democratic system needed to recognize the value of the individual as the basis for community. Fragmented societies were the ones most at risk of democratic backsliding and most vulnerable to populism and nationalism. Democracy required those in office to put people at the centre. Education was fundamental to allow people to build a relationship with politics. Parliamentarians must build a culture that brought young people closer to democracy.

**Ms. S. Nuñez Cerón** (Mexico) said that the world was experiencing an erosion of democracy, including through polarization. Polarization was a dangerous state of affairs in which people held opposing or extreme positions that were difficult to reconcile, often leading to political antagonism, division, hatred, intolerance and discrimination. The growing gap between politicians and citizens was also threatening democracy. Social inequalities were becoming more widespread, leading to crime, violence and disrespect for the rule of law. Authoritarianism and unilateralism were also on the rise.

She encouraged delegates to consider the many ways in which the pandemic had impacted democracy. Countries had experienced restrictions from border closure and strict confinement to mandatory vaccination and close monitoring of citizens through technology. The situation had opened up the debate worldwide about restrictions versus freedoms. In that context, it was important to introduce legal frameworks that benefitted the community, promote science and act with efficiency and leadership. Parliamentarians must address issues such as universal access to health care, security, poverty, migration, women's rights and children's rights. She called on parliamentarians to end polarization and encourage reconciliation.

**Mr. E. Mundela** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that democracy was currently facing many different threats, including polarization, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and terrorism. Polarization was growing as a result of a lack of trust among citizens towards politicians. As a result, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had put in place institutions to support democracy and promote honest dialogue with different sections of the population such as political parties, civil society and religious organizations. It had also been promoting gender equality and had managed to achieve a high representation of women in the Senate (25%). He aligned himself with the African Group on COVID-19.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo was a country with solutions on the climate crisis. It had one of the highest proportions of forest cover in the world and could therefore play a key role in carbon capture and storage. He called on the international community to provide support in implementing adaptation and mitigation measures as well as to meet their financial commitments, particularly those under the Paris Agreement. His country also had many mineral reserves, such as cobalt, which were necessary in the production of energy efficient innovations, such as electric vehicles.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo had been greatly affected by terrorism. Armed groups had been operating on its territory for a long time, massacring the population and looting raw materials. A global response was needed to eliminate terrorism. It was important to reinforce capacities, particularly in terms of information exchange and provision of equipment.

Democracy was the only way to find balance and stability in society. Countries should pass good laws to promote and reinforce democracy. However, democracy would not be a success unless those laws were also enforced.

**Mr. R. Lopatka** (Austria) said that democracies were experiencing many challenges, leading to destabilization, polarization, and in some cases, collapse. It was important to discuss ways to overcome division and build community. Love, empathy and solidarity were needed. Countries must find ways to negotiate and communicate with all political systems even if they did not agree with their politics or recognize them as legitimate. For example, the Taliban must be engaged, despite its politics, for the sake of the Afghan people, many of whom were suffering from starvation.

Parliamentarians must work together with those who were critical of them and do everything possible to lessen the disconnection between politicians and the people. By taking to the streets or engaging in debates, people were showing that they cared about political affairs.

In many ways, social media was poisoning democracy. Social media must not be an abused carte blanche for intensifying polarization, spreading fake news or publishing illegal content. Cross-border problems required cross-border solutions. It was important to respect everyone regardless of their point of view.

**Mr. F. Ayadi** (Tunisia) said that Tunisia was facing a very difficult situation. Not only was it dealing with the pandemic, but it was also dealing with a dictatorship. Indeed, on 25 July 2021, President Kais Saied had suspended the activities of Parliament preventing parliamentarians from exercising their mandates. His actions were an aggression against the Tunisian people. Polarization, division and populism were also affecting the country. It was clear that democracy was under threat in Tunisia.

He called on the IPU to help Tunisia regain its democracy. Without democracy, Tunisia would be unable to ensure growth, stability or youth empowerment. The Tunisian situation should be put on the agenda of the next IPU Assembly. He reminded delegates that an attack against one parliament was an attack against all people.

**Mr. N. Miyara** (Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA)) said that democracy was facing many challenges particularly in Africa and the Arab world, including populism and terrorism. There was a need to rework democratic principles and structures and give parliaments the tools to uphold democracy. Democracy must form the basis of development.

There were a number of ways in which countries could overcome democratic challenges. First, it was possible to fight populism by understanding its root causes and allowing citizens to participate in decision-making. Second, one way to address terrorism and other types of geopolitical instability was to abolish the monopoly that some countries had on global resources, including vaccines. Third, cooperation and partnerships were needed. Fourth, it was necessary to address socioeconomic, political and religious concerns with a view to building strong countries. Indeed, weak countries and governments were the most vulnerable to populist movements.

**A representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran**, speaking in exercise of the right to reply, said that the representative of Israel had tried his best to disseminate as much disinformation as possible and make unfounded allegations against Iran. It was not surprising that a country whose creation was built on occupation, massacre, terrorism, aggression and bloodshed wished to spread lies and hatred. The Palestinian nation continued to experience unthinkable crimes at the hands of the Israeli regime, including ethnic cleansing, systematic torture, murder and arbitrary detention. The crimes amounted to genocide and crimes against humanity under international law. Israel had a long-standing campaign to destabilize the region by spreading Iranophobia. He wished to point out that Iran had conventional weapon capabilities and a peaceful nuclear programme which was under the robust supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

He rejected the allegations made by the Yemeni delegation regarding Iran's intervention in Yemen. Iran reiterated its full support to finding a peaceful solution to the Yemeni crisis.

**Ms. R. Kavakci Kan** (Turkey), speaking in exercise of the right to reply, said that Turkey shared a border with Syria and had hosted many Syrian refugees who had fled their country to escape atrocities. However, terrorist organizations had then begun to take the lives of Turkish citizens living near the border. In response, Turkey had acted under article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations to protect its borders. Turkey respected the territorial integrity of Syria but needed to prevent further lives from being taken by terrorists.

*The sitting rose at 18:50.*



## Sitting of Monday 29 November

### (Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 09:15, with Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), Vice-President of the Assembly, in the Chair.*

#### Item 3 of the agenda

#### **General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*** (A/143/3-Inf.1 and Inf.2)

#### *Resumption of the debate*

**Mr. A. Bennai** (Algeria) said that the rising tide of military coups and unconstitutional changes to government exemplified the multiple existential challenges to democracy in an unstable world characterized in many regions by conflict, terrorism, extremism and transnational organized crime. All those were global issues requiring a global approach to their resolution, with a focus on their root causes. Against that backdrop, parliamentarians had an important role to play in consolidating democracy to avoid dire consequences and realize the aspirations of the people they represented to a life of dignity, freedom and peace. Democracy was also intrinsically linked with sustainable development, which must be pursued through attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the interest of peace, prosperity and a better life for all.

With the active participation of civil society, Algeria was capitalizing on its commitment to the SDGs to diversify its national economy and develop a new growth model attuned to the country's social features and the constitutional principle of equality. Newly enshrined as other constitutional principles in 2020 were participatory democracy, gender equality in employment, and the political participation of women and youth. On its path to democratic change, Algeria was intent on strengthening the rule of law, establishing good governance, modernizing justice and promoting rights and freedoms, in addition to fighting corruption and enhancing public services. The COVID-19 pandemic had underlined the commonality of human destiny and the consequential need for joint cooperation – including in addressing political and other crises, especially in the Middle East and Africa – for a better future.

**Mr. S. Cogolati** (Belgium) said that COVID-19 had demonstrated that no part of a world so interconnected was safe unless all its parts were safe. The fight against the virus was not an individual race but a collective marathon for all to win together. The COVID-19 crisis had also raised key questions about business as usual. His own young generation would suffer most from the effects of climate change and be the last in a position to combat them. While global warming figures spoke to the scale of the ambition of the set climate goal, the solutions – including new legal tools – were available. His delegation was proud that its proposal to recognize the crime of ecocide in the IPU resolution on climate-related disasters and their consequences, adopted in May 2021, had attracted the first-ever broad international consensus on the matter. An attack on the commons of one was an attack on all.

Collective efforts were vital to the advancement of gender equality for women and girls, who were the first victims in any crisis. Irrespective of origin or status, all persons had the same fundamental rights, which parliamentarians must work to protect. A small country with “unity makes strength” as its national motto, Belgium was a laboratory of coexistence reflected in its IPU delegation composed of majority and opposition members, men and women, who were also multilingual. Pluralism was the IPU's wealth and its Members were stronger as a single team that used its voice to create a fairer world for all, including future generations

**Mr. B.N. Bassiere** (Burkina Faso) said that polarization was exacerbated by failure to take into account in socioeconomic development policies the inequalities invariably resulting from poor distribution of wealth and services. Witnessing through new information and communication technologies (ICTs) the opportunities available elsewhere, young people legitimately aspired to a better future. Parliamentarians must actively promote the culture of democracy, both in their practices and institutionally. In Burkina Faso, opportunities for women and youth were growing apace thanks to relevant legislation and policymaking, while efforts to bring about a shift in traditional mindsets were making progress, albeit that much still remained to be done. The country had been celebrating an annual women's day since 1984, when women had also first begun to hold senior government positions. Steps were being taken, moreover, to avert the consequences of unemployment and exclusion, which included radicalization and recruitment into terrorism, especially among youth, by providing equal opportunities for all. Inclusive and participatory democracy was also being strengthened through improving the representation of women and youth in parliament.

To maintain and strengthen the trust required for a flourishing democracy, parliaments must make themselves more accessible to citizens and involve them in governance. Citizens in Burkina Faso were assured of regular opportunities to hold parliamentarians to account for their actions, in which context differing views and political affiliations were secondary and must be set aside. In an environment of daily threats to peaceful coexistence and sustainable development, the IPU played a vital role in promoting and protecting democracy as an important system of governance.

**Mr. T.I. Mørland** (Norway) said that, as part of countering rising polarization, parliamentarians must always be respectful of their political opponents, who were needed in any democracy to prompt refined arguments, harder work and consideration of other viewpoints. The bottom line was that opponents, too, had honest motives and good reason for their opinions. The goals were often the same, but there was disagreement on how to achieve them and hence a frequent need for compromise. The public perception of politicians was furthermore determined by their treatment of one another. In Norway, politicians increasingly required protection to remain safe, while the savagery of debate, including on social media, was a deterrent to airing political views, with some individuals feeling entitled to silence others on the basis of their origin or other status. Parliamentarians must work in unison to reverse that situation and ward off democratic decay.

The IPU was an arena for learning built on respect through interaction across a diversity of cultures, faiths and mindsets. With good governance key to earning public trust, parliamentarians must be transparent and accountable in their work. No one could please everyone, but all opinions must be heard in line with the right to freedom of expression, a precondition for democracy underscored by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021 for efforts to safeguard that freedom. Parliamentarians must, however, speak out against hate speech as one of its unacceptable forms. Only through dialogue would a better tomorrow be built to strengthen communities and protect democracy.

**Mr. D. Florea** (Romania) said that the pandemic had brought out the best and the worst in societies, simultaneously affecting democracy and intensifying the pre-existing impact of national security laws and reactions to terrorism threats. The public voice had gained an impressive online presence and civil society, albeit forced to abandon some of its debating topics and formats, had been instrumental in promoting and monitoring respect for human rights. It had also reorganized its participation in public consultation and decision-making. The internet and the widely available ICTs, including social media, had provided an unprecedented space for the development of thriving public initiatives of all kinds.

Xenophobia, racism, and hatred nonetheless remained globally widespread. Political polarization was rising in many countries and the hate speech found on the internet and in the media too often found its way into political discourse. Romanian parliamentarians had committed to taking open, firm and proactive stands against those scourges, irrespective of their grounds and manifestations, by joining the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance. The aim of the Alliance was to cooperate with national parliaments, public authorities and civil society organizations to combat hate speech and xenophobia, which were the opposite of solidarity. Parliamentarians must join forces in that fight, starting by proving that they were transparent, open to the public and accessible. All parliaments were well equipped to provide an education in, and promote action for, democracy. Parliamentarians had a duty to create effective ways of public consultation before enacting laws and taking specific actions.

**Mr. T. Mansmann** (Germany) said that people were more equal than different and were united by seemingly self-evident presuppositions previously considered radical and subversive, such as the assumption that everyone enjoyed, and was equally worthy of, the same rights. In current times, the great challenge of creating a supranational society was that common problems, among them climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and the migration crisis, had only common solutions, which required a common identity. Supranational structures were increasingly the answer to such problems, as in the European Union (EU), where the standardization and harmonization of laws had created a fairer playing field for all. Rooted in economic competition, such structures could be deployed elsewhere in a collaborative effort to resolve global problems.

Radical splits in thinking on controversial topics, such as vaccination, migration and border protection, had widened. If differences remained in Germany, despite 30 years of reunification efforts, easy and fast solutions to major global challenges were unlikely. The lesson learned was that it took patience to change attitudes, which no one could force overnight. Parliamentarians were well qualified to balance conflicting interests while showing necessary respect and dignity to all sides. In effect, strong and reliable multilateral treaties were the most impactful solution to global problems. Protection of human dignity must be the foundation of diplomacy, with global contract compliance the outcome. The more economies interconnected, the more prosperous and peaceful nations would become. The economic power built over the past decades would be key to finding the solutions to global problems.

**Mr. H. Julien-Laferrière** (France) said that his generation's challenge of preventing the world's downfall was not helped by the plethora of social media through which everyone sought to impose their truth, believing it to be the only one, without taking into account others' views or feelings. That inability to doubt one's own truth was a major pitfall, doubt being the beginning of wisdom, according to Aristotle. In international relations, diplomacy had given way to power and increasingly more uninhibited, if not violent, interaction between States. Individuals, too, seemed incapable of compromise for the common good now under threat from ecocide, increasing inequality and democratic decay.

Parliamentarians were especially disconcerted against that backdrop by the fact that parliaments were the place par excellence for forging compromise and must always be inclusive. On that score, there was progress to be made. Parliamentarians must also make every effort to debate the issues of concern for those whom they represented, including with respect to their wider implications for such matters as civil liberties and executive powers, as in the case of COVID-19 laws. In addition, elected representatives must constantly seek to include the public voice in their decisions. In that regard, social media could be a precious ally. In France, the public was consulted on landmark bills before they were considered, but steps could be taken to go further by involving citizens in the drafting process. Increasing public participation in political processes to rebuild public trust in institutions was a task in which the IPU could play a prime role.

**Ms. L. Fehlmann Rielle** (Switzerland) said that the global rise in political polarization, populism and hate speech was a worrying development, as was the unacceptable increase in threats against democratically elected politicians. Democracy would be further undermined by any failure of those politicians to prove their worth through exemplary behaviour – an omission that would fuel existing prejudices in the discourse aimed at discrediting the institution of parliament. In the peaceful country of Switzerland, proposed COVID-19 legislation subsequently enacted had led to violent attacks on its supporters and the health minister as part of a disproportionate and misleading campaign by a minority seeking to exploit public concerns and prevent the application of COVID-19 measures.

The democratic backsliding in all continents had been confirmed by findings in 2020 that more countries were moving towards an authoritarian system than towards democracy. No country was immune to that worrying authoritarian drift, which sent a message to all those committed to strong, democratic, inclusive and transparent parliaments. The pandemic had also deepened social inequalities and highlighted the undervalued role of those in occupations on which society relied to function. The right of universal access to education must be prioritized so that citizens could make fact-based decisions, with no one left behind. Parliaments must also adapt legislation and approve budgets adequate to fulfil policy objectives in such areas as gender-based violence, which must be resolutely combated. They must also continue aiming for gender parity, more youth members and more representatives from migrant backgrounds to enrich debate and find innovative solutions to current challenges.

**Ms. N.W.T. Makwinja** (Botswana) said that socioeconomic challenges in sub-Saharan Africa were largely attributed by some to the inability to practise true democracy that would also enable Africa to contribute to the efforts for a better world. Democracy gave individuals the opportunity to take moral responsibility for their choices and for policy decision-making. Endemic corruption, some of it institutionalized, caused widespread poverty, social injustice, marginalization and conflict, and threatened community-building and unity. Some political leaders abused their power by remaining in office beyond their constitutional term, while social exclusion created unequal societies, jeopardizing peace and stability. Together with parliaments, anti-corruption and auditing bodies must be strengthened to hold leaderships effectively to account.

With its inclusive and accessible political system, Botswana – the oldest continuous democracy in Africa – adhered to constitutionalism, maintained liberal and democratic governance, and was committed to regular, fair, free and credible elections. Democracy was one of its founding principles and a pillar of its Vision 2036 for a land of peace, freedom and progressive governance. Botswana would continue to attract investments, thanks to its political stability, and had been ranked among the least corrupt countries in Africa and worldwide. Its watchdog institutions were working to eradicate all corruption, while parliamentary oversight committees ensured government accountability and transparency in the use of public funds. Botswana considered good governance to be a precondition for peace and sustainable development. In addition to being strengthened to address contemporary challenges, parliaments must be monitored and evaluated for their ability to promote healthy democracy and economic betterment.

**Ms. J. Heitmann** (Denmark) said that differences in the convictions and values of parliamentarians and governments were not a sign of weakness but a true reflection of the democratic composition of parliaments. In addition to decision-making, democracy was about protecting the rights of minorities and other vulnerable groups. Unfortunately, however, democracies were not always as inclusive and representative as thought. Although strong democracies rested on the major pillar of a high-quality education that enabled all individuals to engage in society and political life and to speak up locally and globally, one size did not fit all. Persons with mental disorders were too often lost in educational systems, as in the case of those with the attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) which, if left untreated, could cause lifelong problems. A majority of young people with the disorder had not finished education, were unemployed and were at higher risk of conviction for crimes against persons. In Denmark, the first draft of a 10-year psychotherapy plan was finally in the parliamentary pipeline. The engagement of persons with special needs, including dyslexics, in democratic political life was another challenge, with no quick fixes, despite related improvements in the educational system.

With reference to the recent change of regime in Afghanistan, parliamentarians must continue insisting on the right of all children in that country to education. It was critical for all Afghan girls of all ages to resume their education without further delay and for female teachers to resume their work. Whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere, no girl must be left behind.

**Mr. Á. Lins** (Brazil) said that political polarization was currently a major obstacle to democracy, with ideological extremes vying for public attention and dividing society to the extent that any common denominator was eliminated and dissenters were treated as enemies to be silenced at all costs. Polarization also extended into the domestic sphere, with feuding in homes and on social media further deepened by fake news. It went hand in hand with intolerance, social discontent and loss of public trust in institutions and political parties, resulting paradoxically in a radicalized world in which everything was politicized, extreme beliefs took root, and the democratic path to building consensus and solutions to social problems was generally discredited. Insofar as radicalization always flirted with the death of democracy, it fell to parliaments to reconstruct the fabric of society while fully respecting differences.

In Brazil, the spread of COVID-19 had assumed alarming proportions, claiming many thousands of lives and severely destabilizing the economy. Polarization had once more taken shape to politicize discussions that should have remained purely evidence-based. The Brazilian Parliament had acted swiftly – as parliaments must – to provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable in particular, which took precedence over extremist debates that offered no solutions to hardship and merely widened gaps between voters and politicians. Parliaments must respond to young people's demands with measures that restored their belief in politics as the bulwark of citizenship, respectful dialogue and civilizing achievements. Lastly, they must strive to replace radicalization and intolerance with kindness, understanding and irreversible democratic gains.

**Mr. W. William** (Seychelles) said that, with political education key to influencing and enhancing sound democratic processes and choices for the well-being of all, it was for parliaments to ensure that it was taught from an early age so that upcoming generations would keep themselves well informed. Real-time access to credible information banished fake news and false propaganda. Hence, through appropriate legislation and policies, parliaments must safeguard the right to access information. Political stability was a collective democratic responsibility that parliaments must continually advocate to ensure the citizen ownership required to control global polarizing influences. Parliaments must also safeguard universal human rights to ward off polarizing thoughts, while democratically elected governments must rule credibly and effectively, respecting the rule of law and ensuring inclusive democratic development processes. Parliaments must secure and promote inclusive participation to cement the building blocks of ownership, always upholding the principles of good governance for stability and peace.

Corruption and bribery fuelled progressive polarization, exclusion and public frustration and must be contained and controlled, while in promoting and protecting human rights, parliaments must sensitize the public to the importance of collective responsibility in safeguarding democracy in all its forms. For their part, parliamentarians must honour their obligations as the guardians of democracy and the national interest as well as create oversight tools for ensuring compliance with the principles of good governance. The consequences of choosing I, the people, over we, the people, were well known. All things under the sun were possible. The question was whether they were objective, beneficial and constructive.

**Mr. J. O'Reilly** (Ireland) said that imaginative, creative and practical solutions for healing political, religious, economic divisions were all the more needed in the light of continuing global perils and exacerbated challenges. With their primary focus on improving life for the communities whom they represented, parliaments must work harder and more diligently with all local stakeholders to combat rising intolerance and the threat of political voices seeking to sow bitter division, bigotry and hatred. They must acknowledge difference, respect diversity and promote gender equality and women's political participation, including through gender quotas. Intolerance against communities for reasons such as sexual orientation must also continue to be challenged. Regional and local governments must furthermore be adequately financed and resourced to discharge their responsibility towards those most in need, which implied a willingness to raise local taxes as necessary.

The pandemic had taught that work was better done together and that an inward-looking approach was not the way to defeat COVID-19, which remained a serious and fundamental challenge to democratic structures, notwithstanding that parliamentarians had adapted their working methods to the situation. Parliamentarians must actively lead by example in communicating true and reliable information as part of the collaborative efforts to combat the virus. The global distribution of vaccines must, however, be fairer and equitable to ensure that all were safe, including vulnerable communities, while those seeking to use the virus to divide communities must be challenged, but always with respect and dignity. Open communication and agreeable disagreement were factors crucial to overcoming all division.

**Ms. G. Burokienė** (Lithuania) said that her country worked hard to promote democratic values, to which it was firmly committed. Given its own bloody fight for freedom, it felt morally bound to respond to requests for assistance from those in countries where democracy was deteriorating and human rights were being undermined. Its concern about human rights violations in Belarus had prompted its appeal for international measures to address the worsening state of affairs in that country, for which the regime should be held accountable. Lithuania was accepting Belarusian asylum seekers fleeing repression and the alarming situation manufactured by the regime to exert political pressure on the EU in reprisal for its support to the Belarusian people in their freedom struggle and for its imposition of sanctions on the country. Condemning the recent Belarusian instrumentalization of migration flows and inhumane exploitation of migrants for political motives, Lithuania called for international engagement with the Belarusian regime for the provision of humanitarian and medical assistance to those migrants.

As to the spread of disinformation, which polarized societies and destroyed trust in democratic institutions, it could be countered by a pluralistic and independent media that checked and provided the true facts. It was imperative to protect media freedom and the health of the global information ecosystem to avert damage such as that caused by fake news about the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than seeking to protect their ratings or trade democratic values for economic benefits, parliamentarians must remain true to those values to create a better global future.

**Ms. J. Bogavac** (Montenegro) said that, having met over three quarters of criteria set in a survey conducted in 2021, her Parliament had emerged as the most open in its region. Its efforts to improve transparency, communicate with the public and step up its legislative and oversight role had also been recognized. It was especially proud to have been the first outside the EU to coorganize with the European Parliament an innovative citizen's assembly to promote public participation in decision-making and policy-setting. It was also the first parliament to have been supported in that endeavour by European institutions. By enabling participants to share their views and recommendations on a given topic, the event had served as a foremost example of how parliaments could enhance public understanding of their role.

All sessions of parliamentary working bodies, in which civil society representatives often participated, were broadcast live via the official YouTube channel. A parliamentary news channel had also been established. Mindful of youth as the country's future, the Montenegrin Parliament regularly hosted visits from school and university students, some of whom had taken part in a recent simulation of its work aimed at teaching them about the law-making process and skills for engaging in political life. Similarly mindful of the need to increase women's political participation, the country's women parliamentarians had joined in forming a group for that purpose. Her Parliament remained committed to achieving the highest democratic standards and appreciated the opportunity to learn about good practices elsewhere for overcoming the obstacles currently faced by all.

**Ms. L. Quartapelle Procopio** (Italy) said that the plethora of challenges confronting many countries jeopardized national and international stability. The fragility of, and need for, international cooperation had been underscored by, respectively, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. Democracy was under constant threat from the prevailing deficit of trust, misinformation, lack of communication and dearth of knowledge about democratic values and processes. In answering the many questions that arose around those issues, arrogance and the polarized approach must be set aside, which did not, however, mean tolerating threats to the shared values of the rule of law, democracy and human rights.

On the contrary, it involved a fight against the chaos and polarization affecting democratic institutions, which called for a comprehensive approach and a strengthening of alliances. Cooperation would nonetheless come about only if parliamentarians first revisited the approaches employed in their own countries, failing which they would appear alienated from the people whom they represented. The place to start initiating change was at home.

**Mr. A.-E. Ntugu Nsa** (Equatorial Guinea) said that the cornerstones of modern democracy included the rule of law, respect for human rights, political pluralism, equality, and numerous freedoms. After 15 years of dictatorship, his country had transitioned from a dysfunctional to a participatory democracy following constitutional amendments approved by referendum. In addition to the health crisis precipitated by COVID-19, Equatorial Guinea had suffered devastating explosions at a military base that had caused multiple deaths and injuries as well as substantial damage to public and private property. The public had joined as one with the country's institutions to deal with the aftermath of the tragedy and the Vice-President had personally intervened to secure moral and financial support for those immediately evacuated from the disaster area and those gravely injured, some of them with loss of limbs. A non-governmental organization had also provided clothing, food, medicine and financial assistance to victims.

His country thanked all the States, international organizations and development partners who had willingly provided assistance during that time of great sadness and the Government of Spain for having so swiftly mobilized to the area. The country's President had called on the international community for financial help to reconstruct the affected area and he wished to make the same call to IPU Members to relay to their respective governments. On another note, a COVID-19 response committee and two subcommittees, one political and one technical, had been formed to fight the pandemic, with the result that COVID-19 infections had fallen and a massive vaccination drive was under way.

**Ms. M.A. Djalo Nandigna** (Guinea-Bissau) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced humankind to face the fact it had pushed aside: global challenges were surmounted only through joint efforts by all. Stubborn belief in fictitious physical and mental boundaries further widened division and encouraged the failure of such efforts. Despite the lessons of history and the institutions, mechanisms and instruments created to promote peace, stability and healthy coexistence, challenges could bring out a selfishness counter to the adage that unity was strength. The spirit of unity must always be present in any fight against existential threats of any kind. Diversity was another strength, meaning that wellbeing must be fairly sought for all, without discrimination and with respect for dignity. Any benefits of advances achieved through healthy competition must also be inclusive and equally shared.

Pandemics, weather events and other natural disasters affected all human beings; nature did not differentiate. Thinking, feeling human beings should likewise not discriminate against their fellow humans but work for the common good and treat everyone equally in making their contribution to progress. States should apply the same principle of equality and must also cooperate with least developed countries rather than seeing them as a money-making opportunity. No one should be considered an adversary. The focus should instead remain on harnessing wisdom, technology and natural resources in the common interest. In sum, the world's inhabitants must join in making concerted efforts to address the global challenges by which they were increasingly interconnected.

**Mr. G. Coutinho Rodriguez** (Uruguay) said that the work of parliamentarians to create a harmonious environment and prevent polarization did not mean that there should be no debate. On the contrary, serious and in-depth debate strengthened pluralism and democracy, as it culminated in the enactment of good laws and in subsequent policymaking that met public needs, including in emergencies. Hate speech should be prohibited. With tolerance and diversity of opinion as a *raison d'être*, parliaments were the ideal setting for forging understanding and agreement. As the sounding board for the public, moreover, they were best placed to interpret the concerns of citizens and address national and global challenges. The participation of, and interaction with, civil society should also be encouraged.

Considering that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was aimed at leaving no one behind and that the Decade of Action towards delivery of the SDGs was already in progress, the challenges that arose from conflict, extreme poverty and climate change must be mitigated or neutralized by combating disinformation and fostering public trust through a broad and plural approach. A clear anti-corruption message must also be sent, as corruption eroded and corroded society, weakening institutions and stoking tensions. In overcoming the threats and challenges to democracy, the salient factors at play were plurality, respect, responsibility, transparency and legislative rigour.

**Ms. M. Palmitjavila** (Andorra) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had led people to reflect on their habits, behaviours and relationships with others and the environment. Existing feelings of alienation from, and distrust in, parliaments had been exacerbated, promoting the rise of the populism and radicalism that eroded, weakened and threatened democratic coexistence. To defend and develop democracy was to restore hope. The impact of the pandemic on all sectors must be assessed to redirect priorities and preclude discrimination and inequality, while political decisions must be rightly targeted and ensure protection for vulnerable groups. For their part, parliamentarians must change their working methods, listen to their citizens, promote enhanced consultation among local, national and global stakeholders, including private actors, and develop new models for youth participation in particular. It would also be helpful to draw on the work of international organizations.

Other considerations included placing ecological development at the heart of political debate, identifying priority projects, and focusing actions accordingly to ensure effective cross-cutting governance to protect the environment and reverse the effects of climate change, including with public involvement. Education must be responsive to the challenges at stake and promote adaptability. Efforts must also be made to promote public health, in particular the mental aspect, protect older persons and secure pension rights and a life of dignity for future generations, with sufficient funding allocated to all such areas of priority. The cooperation witnessed during the pandemic must continue further and beyond, with institutions, parliaments and inter-parliamentary assemblies working to strengthen that solidarity by all available means.

**Ms. W. Andrade Muñoz** (Ecuador) said that parliaments must innovate, division must be overcome and dialogue strengthened to give rise to hope and not hate. The two world wars and the fall of communism had accelerated democratization to the current point where over one half of the global population lived under some form of democracy. Few believed, however, that democracy was working. It was at a crossroads between increasing authoritarianism and innovation and citizen reform in favour of fundamental freedoms, which would survive only if democracy were adapted and revitalized. In that context, in 2020 the Ecuadorian Parliament had significantly reformed the country's Democracy Code so that, among other things, women must lead 50 per cent of party candidate lists by 2025 and penalties were imposed for political violence, which discouraged women in particular from political participation.

Urgent challenges to be countered in cooperation with the younger generations included climate change. Representative democracy would be enhanced by strengthening institutions. Political parties were the pillar of democracy and there was no democracy without political parties, which would not thrive without it. Bold political parties were needed to expand the boundaries of democracy, expound the cause of feminism and environmentalism, fight corruption and strengthen democracy through dialogue and consensus as a priority. It was time to reflect on lessons learned from the pandemic and implement the reforms needed to deliver the fundamentals for human dignity, which should be a daily objective furthered by parliamentary networks to promote to citizen participation.

*Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain) took the Chair.*

**Mr. M.R. Majidi** (Secretary General, Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA)) said that tackling the challenges to democracy was a multifaceted issue requiring an all-inclusive approach, especially in a critical pandemic situation serving as crash test for governance systems and institutions. The pandemic had raised questions about the balance struck between public health and civil liberties and the extent to which those liberties could be restricted to serve the common good. Although recent surveys had indicated that most people were willing to sacrifice some civil liberties to that end, those questions had led to widespread controversies about whether democracies were being sacrificed at the expense of public health. Democratic governments generally sought to take public preferences into account. The degree to which citizens agreed with the rationale for legislative or regulatory restrictions on liberty had a direct bearing, however, on their willingness to comply with emergency response policies. It was the compliance with those policies that could ultimately determine their success or failure.

**Mr. S. Boule** (Senior Specialist, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) said that the Global Fund had saved over 44 million lives in its 20 years of existence and was the largest multilateral grant funder for health systems strengthening, thanks to sustained political support from countries worldwide. The Global Fund had responded swiftly when COVID-19 had struck, providing over US\$ 4.1 billion to assist more than 100 countries, but funding for its work was running out. Sustained investments in health systems must be a higher political priority everywhere. They showed citizens that government was working and building back better and also created a real opportunity to strengthen democracy. A successful outcome to the Fund's Seventh Replenishment in late 2022 to raise funds for its coming three-year grant cycle would be critical to its work to end the existing HIV, tuberculosis and malaria pandemics by the 2030 target and to building stronger health systems to deal with the future pandemic threats that would inevitably come.

**Mr. F. Zon** (Indonesia, and Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC)) said that rampant and entrenched corruption was a key root cause of social divide and drove many long-term effects, including social polarization, grievances and lack of public trust in democratic processes, while also undermining economic growth and social cohesion. Fighting corruption implied healing that divide, with parliaments central to the attainment and sustainability of necessary good governance.

As a distinctive platform for that collaborative work, GOPAC focused on promoting more robust legislative openness and advocated legislation to guarantee the right to public information and promote proactive disclosure of parliamentary information to encourage evidence-based public debates. It also encouraged the involvement of those affected by public decisions in the decision-making process and sought to ensure that policymaking did not further exclude and marginalize minority and vulnerable groups. To that end, it was eager to facilitate information exchange, provide knowledge products, share best practices and engage in peer review and reciprocal learning across regions.



**Mr. D. Verga** (Sovereign Order of Malta) said that his order was honoured and privileged to have been granted permanent observer status at the IPU, an organization with principles and values that it shared, as evidenced by its millenary humanitarian mission to help the weak, the sick, the marginalised and the needy. A neutral, impartial and independent faith-based institution, the order was ready to contribute ideas and proposals for combating the multitude of challenges facing States and societies and to share its experience and expertise to reinforce confidence and trust in representative institutions as well as enhance the culture of dialogue, solidarity, cooperation and mutual respect. It had a good and mutually beneficial relationship with the IPU, with which it had coinciding interests on many issues, especially interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, human rights and rule of law. It looked forward to fruitful cooperation between the two.

**Ms. A. Shkrum** (Ukraine) said that the refrain of references to crises of democracy, division, populism, disinformation, manipulation of public opinion and social media dangers, had resonated throughout the current debate. Described by Winston Churchill as the worst form of government except for all others that had been tried, democracy was intended to benefit the people, including by promoting their human rights, inclusion and participation. The maxim that the liberty of one citizen ended where the liberty of another citizen began also applied to countries engaged in such exercises as the annexation of foreign territory, which should be stopped through joint action. Parts of Ukrainian territory had been annexed and occupied by the Russian Federation, resulting in many thousands of Ukrainian deaths and injuries and 1.5 million internally displaced. Hybrid warfare in the form of cyberattacks, lies, fake news and propaganda should also be stopped, a task towards which the IPU should direct full attention.

**Mr. P. O'Sullivan** (Ireland) said that discourse, debate, public engagement should be the seed for any flowering democratic State but that much of the public had disengaged from the political system, especially youth, who felt unrepresented and overlooked. The time needed to address concerns around education, housing and climate change, among others, caused impatience and discontent often manifested online and fuelled by social media and fake news content for which platform providers should be held responsible. In fighting disinformation and disengagement, civic and political education such as provided to all students in Ireland was a key weapon. It helped to inform them of their role in the world through making their voices heard and exercising their responsibility as citizens to ensure continued participatory and transparent democracy. At the current Assembly, the swift transformation of five emergency motions into one clearly exemplified an achievement of dialogue, communication and respectful agreement that could be replicated elsewhere.

**Mr. F. Naek** (Pakistan) said that democracy continued to evolve in his country, one of the largest democracies in the Muslim world, but that constant attention was required to combat antidemocratic forces. It was important to preserve healthy freedom of expression and opinion and to address economic inequality, which was a major cause of friction and mistrust leading potentially to conflict and extremism. Parliamentarians must play a role in promoting cohesion, understanding and compromise – in which a free media could assist by encouraging tolerance – and in narrowing the wealth divide. Other factors of immense value in driving positive democratic evolution and building trust included free and fair elections, institutional transparency and swift access for all to impartial justice. Democracy could not take full root or be revived without collective efforts, however, which spoke to the importance of the IPU as a forum for promoting democratic norms. Ultimately, the worst democracy was better than the best dictatorship.

**Mr. W. Soto Palacios** (Peru) said that democracy entailed not only voting in scheduled elections but also a public duty to participate in political life for the wellbeing of all. The strength of democracy was in direct proportion to the exercise of a citizenship conditioned by the political, socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Democracy implied coexistence in a prevailing environment of freedom, justice, equality and solidarity, where decisions were adopted by consensus and aimed at creating social equality. More must be done to ensure that all population groups felt represented and assured of well-functioning institutions working for the benefit of citizens. Change began in the home and family; better people would make for better citizens, which was in turn conducive to a more humane, tolerant and respectful society. The whole of that society must join in building a better community in which freedom, equality, justice, human rights, development and democracy would be realized.

**Ms. J. Oduol** (Kenya) said that women in her country still appeared to be looking in on all decision-making bodies from the outside instead of being represented within. In seeking to make democracy work, the Kenyan Parliament would deal with ethnicity, which kept women out; corruption, fake news and cybercrime, which victimized women; and weak institutions, which lacked a focus on women. Parliaments must take account of women's voices; political parties must ensure that women had a say; and women themselves must make a marked difference in leadership, such as by addressing vital issues and bringing unheard voices to the fore. Parliaments must be representative of diversity, ensure equal social and political opportunities for all, protect citizenry and the right and responsibility to provide political leadership, promote neutral engagement and accountable public spending, and ensure that all voices were heard. After all, democracy was for the people, with the people – and women were people.

**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), opening the last segment of the debate which was reserved for young parliamentarians, said that parliamentarians must deploy their legislative and oversight powers to stem growing polarization and the spread of misinformation through social networks. For her country, the threat posed by conflict to social cohesion and to respect for diversity, inclusion and human rights was a major concern. A proponent of the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign, the Congolese Parliament was seeking investment to build capacities among its youngest members for promoting good governance. Unless laws were properly enforced, rights and needs could not be guaranteed and democracy itself was unenforceable. With its rich biodiversity and consequential decisive role in climate change mitigation, her country was committed to fulfilling its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. It needed international support and solidarity, however, to stop the bloodshed inflicted by groups involved in pillaging its natural resources and sowing division in the process. Only then could stability be restored and development pursued.

**Ms. L. Vasylenko** (Ukraine) said that, as they moved online thanks to the advances of technology, parliaments had become isolated from the people they represented in what was a new self-imposed challenge to democracy. Lack of openness and the opportunity to meet and speak freely also fed fake news, another enemy of democracy. With information travelling through social media at unprecedented speed, there was often no time for fact-checking. It was therefore increasingly easy to manipulate facts and spread tension leading to division, fragmentation and polarization. In the pandemic recovery, parliaments must do more to reopen to their constituents as places for free and open discussion involving all groups and to strengthen participation by youth and women. In addition to uniting their efforts for that purpose, parliamentarians must adopt an uncompromising stand towards countries that used information as manipulation and people as weapons against democratic regimes.

**Mr. S. Tynkkynen** (Finland) said that the unpleasant message concerning the global state of democracy was that the world was growing more authoritarian. For the fifth consecutive year, more countries were reportedly moving away from democracy, with almost three quarters of the world's population living in democratically backsliding or non-democratic countries. The false assumption made after the Cold War had been that countries would automatically adopt the democratic system of government. Democracy required hard work, however, as nowhere was it immune to non-democratic actors. Authoritarianism posed an increasing threat, especially in countries where the democratic concept was still fragile. Reckless acts of authoritarian regimes included those of Belarusian President Lukashenko, who used Europe's own structures against it to cause instability. Such players followed a different rulebook and were not afraid to exercise other forms of power to achieve their goals. No one must remain inactive and silent in the ongoing battle where values were constantly being challenged.

**Ms. T. Owatemi** (United Kingdom) said that it was clear to young parliamentarians like herself that many of the key problems discussed at the current Assembly were inherited from decisions made – or not made – by previous generations, problems that had grown in the lifetime of those parliamentarians but did not originate from them. A beauty and benefit of the parliamentary system, however, was that, however historic the institution and however long-standing the issues, it remained grounded in the here and now. Parliamentarians were elected to forge fresh paths and ideas. Their work was defined not only by the past; it was constantly shaped by current office holders, their ideals and their relationship with those whom they represented. Young parliamentarians in a position to make positive change must continue to shape their own democracies with optimism, energy and innovation, creating a better world and legacy for the coming generations in areas such as climate change, diversity and gender inequality.

**Mr. S. Patra** (India) said that his country was home to the largest youth population of all, which had a significant role to play as a driving force in its fast-growing economy. A beacon of hope as in all nations, Indian youth were encouraged through the national youth policy and other initiatives to participate in political and decision-making processes at all levels and were an important focus in the country's 25-year development roadmap. The voting age stood at 18 and the age for election to the Lok Sabha and state legislatures at 25. Lok Sabha members aged below 40 currently amounted to 12 per cent. An Indian Youth Parliament had been established, together with informal platforms for interaction between young parliamentarians and leaders. In short, the country was well resourced to support youth in developing their skills and knowledge in the areas of political procedure and social and community welfare, thereby promoting their participation in decision-making.

**Ms. M. Farrell** (Ireland) said that the challenges to democracy were many. Economic inequality had led to political inequality, with many communities feeling disenfranchised as they saw the influence of big money in politics and the constantly revolving door between governments and vested interests. Those communities must be empowered anew by centring government policy on ordinary people and finally shutting the door on lobbying by big corporations and vested interests, a political reality that could be no longer ignored. A stark example was the refusal to provide the COVID-19 vaccine patent to the developing world where, if left uncontained, the virus would continue to mutate and undermine the global fight against it. Led by science and solidarity, parliamentarians must end the hierarchy and ensure access for all to the vaccine. The profits of private corporations could not be allowed to continue. If COVID-19 was a public pandemic, vaccines must be a public good.

**Mr. H. Naderi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was important to plan for the development and needs of young people, who were the most motivated and powerful drivers of transformation and dramatic change. As history had shown, many scientific, cultural, political and economic developments had taken place thanks to the extraordinary ability and unparalleled dynamism and thinking of young people. To mobilize their role fully, including in difficult situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, young people must be suitably trained and educated. In his country, the young generations had given rise to many scientific and economic innovations in recent decades. One third of Iranian parliamentarians, furthermore, were young people representing various ethnicities, religions and schools of thought. As they developed their talents, young people grew in awareness of their significant power and political responsibilities. Their role in promoting democracy would bring a turning point towards meaningful participation in good governance and the preservation of national values.

**Ms. R.A. Barbarán Reyes** (Peru), speaking as her country's youngest parliamentarian at 27 years of age, said that young people had the energy and positivity needed to assume public office and that parliaments must take steps to involve them in politics and encourage their aspirations to holding such office. In Peru, more political parties were listing committed young people as their candidates and a youth parliament had been created to introduce young Peruvians aged between 18 and 25 years to parliamentary life and the workings of Congress. Its members represented their respective regions and tabled their own initiatives. It was a successful experiment that could be emulated elsewhere and, in that vein, it would be interesting to learn about similar ventures aimed in other parliaments at increasing youth visibility and participation. Young people were not competitors but allies. She called on Members to back the IPU's *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign.

**Mr. E. Eriksen** (Norway) said that, since its inception in 1889, the IPU had been building bridges among countries, recognizing that problems could not be solved by one nation alone. Collaborative efforts by all were needed, for instance, to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and slow down climate change, challenges for which there was no quick fix. No one could do everything, but everyone could do something. Representing 179 nations around the world, what the IPU said and did mattered. It must focus on strengthening democracy, especially for women and youth. One half of the global population was under 30 years of age, yet only 2.6 per cent of parliamentarians were in that group. All must be able to participate in democratic processes, regardless of age or other status. Parliamentarians must work to secure that right, listen to the silent voices and stand up against oppression and for democracy.

**Mr. J.W. Kiarie** (Kenya) said that, in his country, political instability, corruption, poor governance structures, limited responsiveness and representation and climate change had been identified as the day's real challenges to democracy. A further challenge was the information overload fuelled mostly by technology, especially social media, through which fake news, together with distorted truths and ambiguous and fuzzy moral and ethical positions, were circulated non-stop around the globe at the speed of light. The resulting damage to unity of purpose made it difficult to coalesce and build on positions of goodwill in parliamentary democracies. Parliamentarians must decide to fulfil their mission to overcome such challenges; democracy depended on it. The democracy inherited from their forebears should be protected boldly and, most importantly, innovatively, so that it could be bequeathed to future generations. Parliamentarians must therefore resolve to keep democracy alive by jealously guarding and defending it for all time.

**Ms. J. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala** (South Africa), noting that a nation's future rested with its youth, said that African youth were affected by such problems as unemployment, violence and conflict. Their concerns remained unaddressed, and they were under-represented in decision-making bodies, including parliament. More parliamentary youth caucuses should be established, as advocated by the IPU, to champion youth issues and ensure that government programmes were firmly youth-oriented. Since the establishment of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians in 2018, youth participation in politics had increased but at a slow pace. Possible impediments included the high minimum age for parliamentary candidates, a dearth of young political party members for various reasons, and the tendency for parties to select more experienced candidates. Parliamentary youth quotas had proved effective elsewhere, but there was no legislative or constitutional provision for them in South Africa, where Parliament was instead working to create a youth caucus and other mechanisms to promote youth representation.

**Mr. D. Stögmüller** (Austria), expressing appreciation for the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians, said that its members not only helped newcomers like himself to find their way around the IPU Assemblies but supported young parliamentarians around the globe to build networks and exchange ideas on shaping politics from the youth perspective. In the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the virus control measures introduced had exacerbated existing polarization. With people feeling angry, frustrated, disbelieved and unheard, politicians hard pressed to engage the public in dialogue must strive daily to demonstrate that they could make a difference.

Immediate action must also be taken to combat climate change, a massive crisis for which there was no simple cure and the consequences of which were starting to emerge. Innovative projects such as the Austrian Climate Assembly, which involved the grass roots in forging the country's climate policies, could contribute towards improving dialogue and bring hope by showing the difference made by togetherness.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) said that online child sexual exploitation and abuse could be described as a global epidemic further compounded by the countless images and videos uploaded non-stop, with severe physical and mental consequences for children and their lives. Through the internet, harmful content of that nature – with which only a limited circle would otherwise be familiar – was easily accessible and spread quickly and uncontrollably while perpetrators benefited from digital anonymity, making prosecution more difficult. The comprehensive global approach needed to tackle the issue called for stronger and more harmonized legal frameworks; legislation criminalizing the production, distribution, purchase and possession of such content; and more robust global law enforcement cooperation through information exchange. Prevention and intervention measures must also be stepped up to accelerate the detection of sexual offences, to which education was key. Parliamentarians had a shared responsibility to protect the most vulnerable and establish a culture of vigilance to fight the problem.

**Mr. M.R. Rahmani** (Afghanistan), speaking at the end of the debate in an observer capacity, said that the recent Afghan peace process had not achieved the desired outcome, including preservation of gains achieved, and had also been negatively affected by discriminatory policies and organized corruption in Afghan leadership circles. Stronger, younger, more educated and with more women members, the Afghan Parliament over which he had presided had worked hard to consolidate democracy, securing enormous popular support and legitimacy as a result. Having seized power, the Taliban had imposed their brutal rule leading to thousands of deaths, a mass exodus, fear for those who remained, the closure of schools and the release of violent criminals.

The Afghan Constitution and hundreds of laws had been repealed, all obligations under international instruments had been abandoned, and there were no courts and no parliament. Taliban rules were based on personal and ideological beliefs, with no understanding of the day-to-day running of a country. Afghans consequently had no livelihood, with all that that implied, and Afghanistan was furthermore the preferred destination of international terrorists running rampant and liable to launch attacks on neighbouring countries. International disregard of the threat posed by the Taliban regime and its terrorist allies would have dangerous consequences for the region and beyond. To avert a bloody civil war and prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups, Afghanistan must have an inclusive national government in which all groups could see themselves reflected. Without international pressure for unfettered humanitarian aid, innocent Afghans would die from hunger and poverty, with countless others continuing to suffer under tyranny.

*The sitting rose at 12:50.*

## Sitting of Monday 29 November

### (Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 15:15 with Ms. M. Batet Lamaña, President of the Spanish Parliament and President of the 143rd Assembly, in the Chair.*

**The Chair** drew attention to the emergency item entitled *Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic*.

**Mr. W. William** (Seychelles), rapporteur of the emergency item, said that the drafting committee for the emergency item had met the previous evening to review the draft resolution. The following countries had taken part in the meeting: Belgium, Mexico, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Zambia. Mr. J. Wadehul (Germany) had been appointed as the Chair. An expert advisor from UNAIDS had also contributed to the working of the committee.

The Assembly had also had the chance to debate the resolution. Members had been unanimous that vaccine equity was a matter of serious concern, highlighting the need to remove all barriers to global immunity.

The final draft of the resolution reflected the importance that the global parliamentary community placed on vaccine equity. It was necessary to change the narrative from “no one is safe until everybody is safe” to a more convincing global safety status. One of the priorities for promoting vaccine equity was to raise awareness of the effectiveness of vaccines and encourage positive uptake.

**Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda** (Zimbabwe) said that he wished to voice some concerns and asked how he should proceed.

**The Secretary General** said that the Assembly was at liberty to propose amendments to the text. However, those amendments should not change the scope or substance of the resolution. Amendments related to language or wording were permitted. Mr. Mudenda should clarify his concerns.

**Mr. G. Coutinho Rodriguez** (Uruguay) said that the drafting committee had worked hard to produce a final draft of the resolution that reflected the spirit of what the Assembly had wished to convey. There had been a long and healthy debate and members had tried to be as concise as possible. A decision had been made to be specific about inequalities between countries as well as to talk about “vaccination” rather than “vaccines”. The final draft was based on the motion submitted by the African Group which had received the unanimous support of the Assembly. Mr. Mudenda should specify exactly what he did not agree with so that a solution could be found.

**Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda** (Zimbabwe) said that preambular paragraph 8 should say “developing countries” instead of “high income countries”. An opening phrase was needed before operative paragraph 1 indicating that it was the 143rd IPU Assembly speaking. Under operative paragraph 1, the phrase “the most affected regions” should be replaced with “the most COVID-19 affected regions”. Operative paragraph 2 should say “urges” instead of “calls upon” and “observe” instead of “recognize” to emphasize the critical nature of the problem. He believed that operative paragraph 3 should be more forceful, preferring the word “implores” over “encourages”. The phrase “to ensure vaccine access for all vaccine-deserving beneficiaries” should be added after “regional initiatives”. Operative paragraph 4 needed to reflect the critical issue of vaccine patenting which was affecting the ability of some countries to manufacture vaccines. Operative paragraph 6 should say “COVID-19 vaccine supply” instead of “COVID-19 vaccines”.

**Mr. W. William** (Seychelles), rapporteur of the emergency item, said that he had no problem making the changes proposed by Mr. Mudenda as long as the drafting committee agreed.

**Mr. G. Coutinho Rodriguez** (Uruguay) said that the word “implore” had different connotations in different languages and some members had not been comfortable with it. It could, however, be an issue of translation which was easily solved. Vaccine patenting had to do with vaccines while the motion was about vaccination. A conversation on the topic would be very long and could result in a text that altered the meaning of the original motion or went against the momentum of the Assembly. Concerns related to language could be resolved but those related to substance could not.

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands) said that some of the comments made by Mr. Mudenda would alter the text in a way that it would lose the support of the Twelve Plus Group. The content should be kept the same. It was important to refer to “vaccination” rather than “vaccines”.

**Mr. J.K. Mhagama** (United Republic of Tanzania) agreed that most of the content should remain unchanged since it had been supported by the majority of the Assembly. However, he would accept any changes related to the wording of the text.

**Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda** (Zimbabwe) agreed that part of the problem could be related to translation. He was substantially in favour of the resolution but believed it should be cleaned up. The resolution must be written in the Queen’s English. The issue was not so much about vaccination but about vaccine equity. Vaccine equity was about ensuring access to vaccines in a manner that was non-discriminatory.

**Mr. W. William** (Seychelles), rapporteur of the emergency item, said that he would go with the majority opinion. However, any issues related to language could be amended by the Secretariat.

**The Secretary General** said that the rules stipulated that amendments could be made to the draft resolution up until it was adopted by the Assembly. However, those amendments must not change the scope or substance of the resolution. It was important to be clear that the proposals made by Mr. Mudenda were related to language and not substance. The Secretariat would then be able to make those changes after the resolution was adopted.

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands) said that she believed that some of the proposals made by Mr. Mudenda did indeed change the substance of the resolution, notably his comments relating to the difference between vaccines and vaccination.

**The Chair** took it that the Assembly wished to adopt the resolution on the condition that the changes proposed by Mr. Mudenda did not affect the substance of the text.

*The resolution was unanimously adopted.*

*The sitting rose at 15:55.*

## Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

### *Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*

#### SITTING OF SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER

(Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 09:10 with Mr. D. Marie (France), Member of the Bureau of the Standing Committee, in the Chair.*

#### **Adoption of the agenda** (C-III/143/A.1)

*The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Approval of the summary record of the Committee's virtual session held during the 142nd IPU Assembly (April/May 2021)**

*The summary record was approved.*

#### **Preparation of a resolution entitled *Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse***

##### **(a) Presentation of the draft resolution and explanatory memorandum by the co-Rapporteurs** (C-III/143/DR and C-III/143/M)

**The Chair** announced that the 2021 session of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) would take the form of a hybrid meeting held in Katowice, Poland from 6 to 10 December 2021. Parliamentarians were encouraged to take part in the Forum, which would include among its main topics of discussion issues that were relevant to the present resolution: privacy and legitimate use of personal data; striking a balance between protecting freedom of expression and preventing harmful content; and governance of artificial intelligence.

He recalled that the draft resolution and explanatory memorandum currently before the Standing Committee had been prepared by three co-Rapporteurs: Ms. A. Gerkens (Netherlands), Ms. J. Oduol (Kenya) and Mr. P. Limjaoenrat (Thailand).

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands), co-Rapporteur, thanking her fellow co-Rapporteurs, said that the draft resolution had been prepared in an intensive, collaborative process. Around 80 amendments had been received from delegations, which bore testament to the importance of the topic at hand. The contributions had demonstrated the common acknowledgment that parliamentarians must work together to protect children from a scourge that knew no borders. Absence of national legislation hampered the global fight against online child sexual exploitation and abuse: if one country left a legal loophole, perpetrators would surely find it and take advantage of it. A wide range of instruments was therefore needed, not only in the form of essential, cross-cutting legislation, but also protection mechanisms for victims, such as helplines.

While it was clear that online child sexual exploitation and abuse was a difficult subject, often not talked about, the general acknowledgement among parliamentarians of the need for an IPU resolution on the matter was encouraging; the online world was complex and difficult to understand but parliamentarians should not underestimate themselves. Although young people had a more extensive knowledge of how to use online platforms and learned quickly in a rapidly changing environment, adults had a greater awareness of risks and dangers. Young people needed adult guidance; the online world was both educational and positive but could also be dangerous.

Although sexual abuse of children was also an offline problem, the resolution focused specifically on the online aspects, which were multifarious and complex, and as yet rarely addressed. There were no simple answers: a slew of measures was required across sectors. It would have been difficult to condense into a draft resolution the exploration of those measures. The co-Rapporteurs had therefore used, as a starting point, the WeProtect Global Alliance Model National Response, which constituted comprehensive guidance that could be adapted to any country's specific national circumstances. The co-Rapporteurs hoped that the resolution would launch a discussion on the subject, which would continue until all children everywhere in the world were safe.



**Ms. N. Lesuuda** (Kenya), speaking on behalf of Ms. Oduol (Kenya), co-Rapporteur, said that as technology was taking root all over the world, there were several concerns that had set the basis for the draft resolution: the absence of unified international law on child online abuse to inform national legislation; the need to develop technology to scan the internet; the need to equip and train agencies at the national level on budgetary and other requirements; the need to enhance collaboration between all stakeholders, including parents and other duty bearers, on emerging best practices; and the need to tackle challenges of law enforcement for cybercrime. National parliaments must strive to implement legislation and apply best practices.

International cooperation on law enforcement was needed in respect of the way in which evidence of online crimes was received, processed and presented, and on how it was exchanged. User support should be provided for child protection helplines. Coordination mechanisms should be developed to share information between companies, in particular gaming companies, and governments regarding activities on messaging platforms. Support was needed for the implementation of guidelines for regulatory authorities on specific action to be taken when violations occurred. Weak law enforcing mechanisms should be revised, in particular with regard to holding service providers, companies and perpetrators to account.

Mechanisms must be in place to enable the online presence of known sex offenders to be reported to the relevant authorities without fear of reprisals for breach of privacy. Legislation gaps – such as the absence of laws preventing paedophiles from crossing borders – should be filled and weak legislation on cybercrime should be strengthened. Capacity building was also essential, particularly since a significant proportion of online child sexual exploitation was the result of grooming or coercion by duty bearers. Weaknesses in awareness-raising programmes and education for policymakers, parents and other duty bearers must be rectified. International cooperation should focus on six areas: policy and governance; criminal justice; victim support; education and awareness-raising; industry procedures; and media and communications.

#### **(b) Debate on the draft resolution**

**Mr. F. Naek** (Pakistan) said that the draft resolution was well-drafted and encompassed all aspects of online child exploitation and abuse. Cooperation between countries was essential. Awareness and understanding of the problem were widespread among policymakers in Pakistan, who had taken major steps towards protecting children by ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and enacting legislation at the national level to prevent and punish child abuse. Child pornography, seduction and grooming of children had been criminalized in an amendment to the Criminal Code. A national commission for the rights of the child had been established, with branches at the provincial and federal levels, which advised the Government, and kept up to date with developments in international standards. Under the Juvenile Justice Act, legal advice was provided to minors free of charge. Legislation had also been enacted on an integrated response to recover abducted and sexually abused children. A helpline had been set up to report cases of child abduction and missing children. Standards of decency in the media were set by law and the possession of images of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct was prohibited. The adoption of the resolution currently before the Standing Committee would be a positive step in assisting parliaments in passing more legislation to further the protection of children against online abuse.

**Ms. A. Attalides** (Cyprus) said that increased use of digital space in response to restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 had allowed for increased online abuse of children. Parliamentarians had a duty to safeguard childhood. The adoption of specific, comprehensive and harmonized legal frameworks, based on the WeProtect Model National Response, was crucial. Infrastructure must be established to protect victims and provide them with a healthy and supportive environment. Parliaments should consider legislating on social media, giving companies the power to identify, delete and block child online abuse and sexually explicit content. Education for policymakers, law enforcement officers and the public was also key. Since 2014, legislation in Cyprus on combating child exploitation and child pornography had also included provisions for online offences. As legislators, parliamentarians understood the importance of a collective response. The IPU initiative to develop a model law against child online exploitation was welcome. Parliaments had a key role in cross-border cooperation to prevent known perpetrators from committing offences in other countries. To protect children was to protect the future of society.

**Mr. D. Velkovski** (North Macedonia) thanked the co-Rapporteurs for their work on the draft resolution. The international framework for the protection of children's rights, while comprehensive, had been adopted before the widespread use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and social media, when offences against children had not been linked to the digital environment. The guidelines on combating child sexual exploitation and the sale of children in the digital age, launched by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, were therefore welcome. Despite a broad framework of domestic legislation in the Republic of North Macedonia to protect children against violence, implementation remained a challenge. A national strategy and action plan on violence against children had been adopted, and a protocol on cooperation between competent institutions in cases of sexual abuse of children and paedophilia had been established. An amendment to the Criminal Code was under consideration to include provisions regulating online abuse, sexual harassment and stalking. Parliamentarians had a duty to do their utmost to ensure comprehensive legislation to protect children against any form of violence or exploitation in digital spaces.

**Mr. D. Florea** (Romania) said that online criminal activity and the use of the dark web had increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Attention must be paid to putting effective legislation in place to combat such activity, giving due account to international and regional obligations. Romania's children's rights protection system was based on the European Union system, and international instruments and strategies. Parliaments had a heavy responsibility to ensure that children were protected at all times. The adoption of the resolution currently before the Standing Committee was therefore crucial. Parliaments must work closely with law enforcement and other stakeholders to guarantee that children were protected against exposure to any and every form of abuse, whether online or offline.

**Mr. V. Dayal Ram** (India) said that India had enacted landmark legislation – the Prevention of Children from Sexual Abuses Act, which had been amended in 2019. While his delegation agreed broadly with the issues covered in the draft resolution, which underscored the need for national legislation to combat new and emerging forms of violence, it had submitted a number of amendments. He explained the intention behind those proposals, which included: aligning language in the preamble with that of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; adding language acknowledging the importance of ICTs as a tool for children's learning, socialization, and enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the right to education and freedom of expression; and expressing concern about emerging forms of violence against children and cyberbullying facilitated by the use of ICTs.

**Ms. J. Salman** (Bahrain) thanked the co-Rapporteurs for their work on the draft resolution and said that children must be protected against all dangers and risks. Online sexual abuse was an abhorrent crime against children and should be treated with the same gravity as terrorism and money laundering. It was an international, cross-border crime that could only be addressed through a large-scale, concerted and comprehensive effort. Measures imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19 had resulted in a significant increase in screen time for children, who had been deprived of their normal lives. Perpetrators had taken advantage of the crisis, exploiting children through internet gaming where the children were groomed, exploited and abused. Children were fearful of telling their parents, the mental health impacts were significant, and in some cases, victims had attempted suicide.

Parliamentarians must do their utmost to fight such crimes. Children were the technological generation and must be protected. The support network for fighting online child abuse and exploitation must be comprehensive and based on close cooperation and information sharing. Perpetrators must be identified and all companies involved must cooperate with all other stakeholders internationally, and in cases of violations must be brought to account for such dangerous crimes against such a vulnerable group. Awareness-raising for children must also be a priority; cyber safety for children should be included in the educational curriculum. Media awareness was also crucial. An international approach was needed to protect victims; local efforts were not sufficient. Cooperation at all levels was key.

**Ms. A. Nassif** (Egypt) said that despite difficulties in estimating the scale of online crimes, their cross-border nature meant that international cooperation was essential and that robust domestic legal frameworks must be in place, with legislation in line with international standards. Ratifying international treaties and ensuring their domestication was the first step in that regard. Egypt was keeping pace with technological development and must therefore also keep pace with regard to legislation. The Children's Act had been closely aligned with international law, and all stakeholders had been consulted thoroughly when drafting legislation to protect children. Recent amendments to the Criminal Code criminalized online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. International cooperation was essential to fight internet crime and child abuse through a variety of working mechanisms, techniques and strategies. Law enforcement officers and investigators must be trained specifically to deal with such crimes.

**Ms. S. Nane** (Uruguay) said that online child sexual exploitation and abuse was a cross-border challenge that required a comprehensive and collaborative approach. The draft resolution included several particularly important aspects: acknowledgement of the role of poverty in online child sexual exploitation and abuse; the need to boost women's economic empowerment; and the need for sufficient infrastructure to support victims. Those points required significant investment and cooperation, and work with international financial institutions to understand where to allocate financial and human resources. A model law for States, drafted by the IPU, should include provisions on holding companies to account in the event of violations to ensure liability of juridical as well as physical persons. Regarding automated detection methods, account must be taken of developments in the dark web and blockchain technologies, which enabled information, abusive and explicit images and content to be hidden. Regarding privacy and the use of artificial intelligence and facial recognition technology, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) was developing a toolkit for responsible artificial intelligence innovation in law enforcement which should be taken into account by parliaments. Seven paragraphs of the WeProtect Model National Response referred to technology. Parliamentarians must therefore, when developing national legislation, cooperate actively with the scientific and technical community.

**Ms. S. Falaknaz** (United Arab Emirates) said that the United Arab Emirates was a pioneer in the provision of safe and secure digital spaces for children, with full protection of their rights. The United Arab Emirates had hosted the second WeProtect Global Alliance Summit. The IPU should prepare a handbook for parliamentarians, offering guidance on specific methods of drafting legislation to prevent online sexual exploitation and abuse of children. Guidance on monitoring implementation should also be included.

**Mr. A.F. Al-Marri** (Qatar) said that despite online child sexual exploitation and abuse having made headlines around the world, there had been no tangible results in tackling the issue. Child abuse and exploitation had been an ongoing problem for decades, with no obvious solutions. The international will had always been lacking. Some States had not taken strong enough measures. Jurisdictions around the world continued to allow child trafficking and abuse to continue. The United Nations had called for a comprehensive legislative model, to be applied in all States, with strong sanctions in the event of violations. The world had come together, through the United Nations and its agencies, to fight terrorism. Online child sexual abuse and exploitation was no less dangerous than terrorism, corruption or money laundering, and must be tackled through a comprehensive and collaborative approach with the same effort as anti-terrorism efforts. The resolution and any model legislation produced by the IPU would be pivotal in tackling the problem.

**Mr. M.A. Sera** (Indonesia) said that online child sexual abuse and exploitation was a crucial issue that must be addressed immediately and appropriately; the decision-making function of parliaments was critical. Children were the future of society. Online sexual abuse and exploitation must be addressed comprehensively. The COVID-19 pandemic had amplified the risk of vulnerable children falling prey to trafficking and exploitation, globally. The increase in cybercrime came at great risk to children; online sexual abuse and exploitation could irreparably damage their development. Urgent measures were therefore needed at all levels. In Indonesia, several pieces of specific legislation had been enacted to criminalize child exploitation. Indonesia had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Parliaments had a responsibility not just to adopt legislation but also to monitor its implementation, taking into account international obligations and standards. Parliamentarians must be involved in the periodic reporting process to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, and update legislation in line with the Committee's recommendations. Online crime, owing to its transnational nature, could only be tackled through a concerted effort by the global parliamentary network, while ensuring that national stakeholders were fully informed about the matter and were enforcing regulations. International cooperation was essential. The Standing Committee must accommodate all views and adopt the strongest possible resolution.

**Mr. Cho Taeyong** (Republic of Korea) said that the value of the return to face-to face meetings for parliamentarians could not be overstated. He welcomed the draft resolution and said that the IPU had a key role to play in tackling child online sexual exploitation and abuse, at such a time of increasing connectedness. The draft resolution was comprehensive. The calls for national parliaments to ensure robust legislative frameworks and for the IPU to draft a model law for States were welcome. Operative paragraph 4 on strategic private sector commitment was particularly important, as most cases of online child exploitation and sexual abuse used online commercial platforms. The Korean Parliament had strengthened its efforts to combat and punish digital sexual crime. It had strengthened support for victims and put in place education measures in schools. Legislative amendments on sexual violence prevention and victim protection had been enacted to broaden the mandate of the relevant authorities to ensure the removal of child pornography and sexually explicit images and content from the internet. International cooperation was essential to combat the sexual exploitation of children. Every parliamentarian must work to that end. The Standing Committee must adopt a comprehensive resolution and ensure its implementation.

**Mr. M. Kabtouleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Syrian Arab Republic, the cradle of civilization, had been fighting terrorism and suffering from a war imposed by terrorists for over a decade. Women and children were being exploited and abused in that conflict. Legislation had therefore been enacted to protect them. Measures had been taken to raise awareness, through social media and the conventional media, to support and protect children and their education. The draft resolution was welcome; it addressed an issue that was crucial for humanity in general and children in particular.

**Ms. N. Lanjri** (Belgium) said that all children deserved to feel happy, safe and protected. The problem of online sexual abuse and violence was, however, particularly prevalent all over the world. Facebook had withdrawn 5.4 million images in the last six months of 2020 alone. Efforts by online companies to address the problem should not be optional. Although online platforms had a responsibility to remove such images swiftly, their deletion could destroy vital evidence for finding the authors of such materials and bringing the perpetrators of crimes against children to justice. Measures must therefore be taken to engage with digital platforms and social media companies to ensure that crimes were halted and that evidence was maintained.

**Mr. R.M. González Patricio** (Cuba) said he wished to thank the co-Rapporteurs for their efforts to draft a resolution, the spirit of which was respected by everyone present and which reflected the commitment of the global parliamentary community. Child online sexual abuse and exploitation took place across borders. International cooperation and joint efforts were therefore critical. Existing experience should be taken into account; regional parliamentary networks had already taken measures. In 2019, the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO) had adopted a model law on grooming to protect children against online sexual abuse by adults. Cuba had a zero-tolerance policy to crimes against children. Regarding the draft resolution, operative paragraph 1 should take account of more than just the WeProtect model for legislation, since other possibilities existed and the resolution should not be restrictive. The importance of preventing revictimization in the context of victim protection should also be emphasized in the resolution. All references to the need for legislation must recall the importance of aligning domestic legislation with international standards.

**Mr. O. Almunawer** (Kuwait) said that the protection of children and their education must be strengthened. Online child exploitation was an inhuman crime, more grievous than terrorism. Children represented the future of society; child abuse had significant repercussions across all aspects of the lives of victims and hampered progress at every level. The imposition of lockdowns and virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had led to a rise in online abuse. Cooperation between countries to share experiences of tackling that situation was crucial. Every effort must be made to hold the perpetrators of crimes against children to account; the deletion of explicit content from the internet was not sufficient. Children must feel safe to report cases of abuse, and particular care must be taken to ensure that the reporting and investigation of cases did not inflict further trauma on the victims.

**Ms. R.R. Makoni** (Zimbabwe) said that child sexual exploitation and abuse constituted a gross violation of their human dignity and physical and mental integrity. Perpetrators of such crimes exploited the vulnerability of their victims for monetary or other benefits. Online child exploitation had immediate and long-term effects and a wide range of impacts on the social and psychological development of the victims and their families.

**Ms. R.A. Barbarán Reyes** (Peru) said that reports from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had shown that increased digital access over recent years had significantly heightened the risk of children being exposed to online abuse and the misuse of their personal information. It was therefore necessary to identify threats and dangers to children's innocence. In the context of increased digital activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, urgent measures were required to protect children. In Peru, 89 per cent of victims of online abuse were female, and the majority of them were children. The number of cases reported had tripled during the pandemic. Although Peruvian legislation had been enacted to protect children, perpetrators could hide behind their screens. It was imperative that other countries with more advanced technology shared their experiences to help implement effective measures to halt such crimes. Cooperation and joint action were crucial to call to account private technology companies, websites and social media platforms. To that end, broad commitment to the implementation of the resolution currently before the Standing Committee was essential.

**Ms. F. Benbadis** (Algeria) said that the Algerian Government was committed to protecting children's rights. To that end, mechanisms were being established to enable children to speak out and legal measures were in place to allow for emergency protection for children in crisis situations. The child protection system was based on five interconnected programmes: a hotline for children to report and talk about issues of concern; a programme for the prevention of violence in schools; a juvenile justice programme; a programme for the protection of refugee children; and a programme to tackle sexual violence against children. In Algeria, sexual violence against children was a taboo subject and had therefore generally not been given sufficient attention. Awareness had increased relatively recently and measures were being taken to investigate child mistreatment, and to strengthen methods of reporting and ensuring that victims were heard, looked after, and protected. The legislative framework was being strengthened and steps were being taken to facilitate access to justice raise children's awareness through education programmes and raise awareness among political bodies.

**Ms. T. Owatemi** (United Kingdom) said that the Government of the United Kingdom was committed to using all available resources to ensure that the United Kingdom became the safest place in the world to be online. Online exploitation would not be tolerated. The vast increase in the use of online platforms in response to restrictions imposed to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic was problematic; exploitation was flourishing because it was going undetected. The Parliament of the United Kingdom was in the process of passing an online safety bill, which placed the duty of care on all online platforms, requiring them to detect and report all significant materials or face fines from the regulatory body. The bill thereby acknowledged that video chat and social media platforms were accountable for any exploitation that took place on their websites. The bill would also facilitate the passing of information to law enforcement, which was currently lacking. For the bill to be successful it must include measures to substantially reduce exploitative materials online, but also give powers to the police to detect abuse and ensure that platforms called out such behaviour and clearly deemed it unacceptable. International measures must be taken to ensure that perpetrators were brought to justice.

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands), co-Rapporteur, thanked all participants for their contributions and their commitment to the topic. Their acknowledgment of the severity of the problem showed clearly that the IPU could have added value on such an urgent matter. It was reassuring to hear that online child sexual abuse and exploitation was a matter of grave concern and priority for all parliaments and was rightly considered as serious a crime as terrorism. It was crucial not to blame children for the situations they were drawn into; children learned by experimentation. Adults had a duty to protect children from making dangerous mistakes.

International law was key. Parliamentarians must therefore ensure ratification and implementation. Online child sexual abuse and exploitation had numerous specificities that made it particularly difficult to address, including the possibility for perpetrators to move between countries to livestream their appalling crimes and fall through loopholes in justice systems. Privacy laws could also protect perpetrators and impede justice. A model law would be helpful, while countries must of course develop legislation fitting to their national circumstances and particular needs. Care must, however, be taken to ensure that companies facing sanctions in a given country were not able to simply move elsewhere and continue their activities with impunity. Sharing experiences was therefore crucial, and the possibility to cooperate with other international bodies must be optimized. While many victims were indeed girls, there was significant evidence that boys were also affected, yet were less inclined to come forward and report cases owing to even greater shame than that faced by girls. The WeProtect Global Alliance Model National Response was a broad document, which took account of all aspects considered by the co-Rapporteurs as they investigated the topic. It was not a law and was not prescriptive or restrictive in its guidance and recommendations on types of legislation to be put in place and measures to be taken. It was the prerogative of each national parliament to make its own laws.

**The Chair** announced that the Standing Committee would proceed to discussing the proposed amendments to the draft resolution.

*The debate on the draft resolution ended at 11:00.*

## SITTING OF MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER

(Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 17:05 with Mr. D. Marie (France), Member of the Bureau of the Standing Committee, in the Chair.*

### (c) Drafting and adoption of the draft resolution in plenary (C-III/143/DR)

**The Chair** said that the draft resolution had been revised in the light of the amendments discussed in the plenary drafting meeting on Saturday, 27 November. A total of 81 amendments had been received and discussed, 57 of which had been integrated into the text. The revised document was presented to the Standing Committee for adoption and subsequent submission to the 143rd IPU Assembly.

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands), co-Rapporteur, said that when she had advocated for the subject of the resolution, many parliaments, while acknowledging the serious problem of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, had expressed concerns regarding the scale of the crime and how to address it. There had been a clear agreement on the need to cooperate and unite. The resolution represented hope, not only as a statement of commitment but as a practical piece of guidance for launching measures to guarantee child protection online while maintaining privacy. The draft resolution was balanced and comprehensive, and a positive step towards ensuring the safety of children the world over.

**Ms. J. Oduol** (Kenya), co-Rapporteur, said that the time spent on preparing the draft resolution had reaffirmed the significant role and mandate of parliamentarians in representing society and ensuring the protection of those vulnerable to extreme suffering. The broad commitment to the draft resolution and recognition of the crucial importance of cross-border partnerships were appreciated. Attention had been paid to striking an appropriate balance between privacy and the need to protect children.

*The Standing Committee adopted the resolution by acclamation.*

**(d) Appointment of a rapporteur of the resolution to the 143rd Assembly**

*At the proposal of the Chair, the Committee appointed Ms. A. Gerkens (Netherlands), co-Rapporteur, as Rapporteur of the resolution to the 143rd Assembly.*

**Preparations for future Assemblies****(a) Subject of the next resolution to be prepared by the Committee**

(C-III/143/4-R.1)

**The Chair** said that the Standing Committee was called on to present the subject of its next resolution to the Assembly. The Bureau had received five proposals, from Germany, India, Maldives, the Russian Federation and Uruguay. It had unanimously agreed to recommend a proposal submitted by the delegation of Germany, entitled *Parliamentary impetus to local and regional development of countries with high levels of international migration and to stopping all forms, including State-sponsored, of human trafficking and human rights abuses*.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) said that there were currently 80 million refugees around the world; migration crises were rife. The subject was therefore relevant to the whole IPU and merited discussion at the 144th IPU Assembly.

**The Chair** said that in the absence of any comments or objections he would take it that the Standing Committee wished to approve that proposal.

*It was so decided.*

**The Chair** said that the Bureau had also recommended that Mr. J. Wadehul (Germany) serve as the first co-Rapporteur.

*It was so decided.*

**Mr. M.A. Sera** (Indonesia) said that his delegation wished to propose Mr. F. Zon (Indonesia) as the second co-Rapporteur for the draft resolution.

*It was so agreed.*

**(b) Committee agenda at the 144th IPU Assembly**

**The Chair** said that at the 144th IPU Assembly, the Standing Committee would not only discuss the topic of its next resolution but would also hold a debate on a second issue. The Bureau had agreed unanimously to recommend the topic proposed by France, *The role of parliaments in reconciling health measures during a pandemic with the preservation of civil liberties*.

**Ms. V. Riotton** (France) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had shown that parliaments had an obligation to strike a balance between protecting public health and defending the principles of democracy. Restrictions imposed during times of pandemic could undermine individual freedoms. Consideration should be given to the limits of such restrictions, and how far measures should go in terms of impacting collective and individual freedoms, as well as to the role of parliaments and their obligation to fulfil their legislative function while preserving civil liberties in unprecedented circumstances.

**The Chair** said that in the absence of any comments or objections he would take it that the Standing Committee wished to accept that proposal.

*It was so decided.*

**The Chair** said that the Bureau also recommended that two workshops be held during the 144th Assembly, if time could be found in the Assembly programme: the first on artificial intelligence, proposed by Ms. Gerkens (Netherlands); and the second on female genital mutilation, proposed by the delegation of Maldives. He took it that the Standing Committee wished to endorse those proposals.

*It was so decided.*

**Elections****(a) Elections to fill existing vacancies on the Bureau**

**The Chair** said that with regard to vacancies on the Bureau, for the Eurasia Group, the Bureau had received the candidature of Mr. H. Konjoryan (Armenia). For the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean (GRULAC), it was proposed that Mr. A. Gajadien (Suriname) would replace Mr. G. Boric (Chile) who was unable to serve the remainder of his term. For the African Group, the Bureau had received the candidature of Ms. E.N. Matiko (Tanzania). Lastly, Mr. A.F. Al-Marri (Qatar) would serve the remainder of the term of Mr. D. Al-Hamad (Qatar) for the Arab Group.

*It was so decided.*

**(b) Election of the President and Vice-President of the Committee**

**The Chair** said that, taking account of the need to ensure equitable geographic representation and gender balance of the officers of the Standing Committees, the chairs of the geopolitical groups had reached an agreement on the distribution of the roles in the Standing Committees. On the basis of that agreement, it was therefore proposed that Mr. A. Gajadien (Suriname) serve as President of the Standing Committee, and Ms. B. Saranchimeg (Mongolia) as Vice-President.

*It was so decided.*

*The sitting rose at 17:30.*



## Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

### SITTING OF SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER

(Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 14:45 with Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain), President of the Standing Committee, in the Chair.*

#### **Adoption of the agenda** (C-I/143/A.1)

*The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Approval of the summary records of the Committee's virtual session held during the 142nd IPU Assembly (April/May 2021)**

*The summary records were approved.*

#### **Briefing by the President of the Standing Committee**

**The President** said that the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law would be holding an open session the following day on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and its universalization for a mine-free world. Members of the Standing Committee were invited to attend and contribute to that discussion. He also wished to draw the Standing Committee's attention to the recent publication of a regional study on sexism, harassment, and violence against women in parliament, focusing on Africa, and to the IPU campaign *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!*, which had identified six ways to increase youth involvement in parliament. All parliamentarians were encouraged to pledge to make parliaments younger, through the dedicated webpage on the IPU website. He also encouraged IPU Members to endorse the IPU Common Principles for Support to Parliaments.

#### **Expert hearing on the theme *Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace***

**The President** recalled that the expert hearing was intended to raise awareness of the topic on which the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security would adopt a resolution at the 144th IPU Assembly. The hearing would afford an opportunity to exchange views with key actors to understand how current peace processes were conducted and how they could be better framed to ensure lasting peace. As decided by the Standing Committee at its session during the 142nd IPU Assembly, Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden) had been appointed as a co-Rapporteur for the preparation of the draft resolution. Following consultations conducted by the President of the IPU in line with the Rules of the Standing Committees, Mr. A.S.K. Bagbin (Ghana) had agreed to serve as the second co-Rapporteur. The draft resolution would be prepared by mid-December 2021; any member parliaments wishing to contribute to its content should send written submissions to the Secretariat by 3 December 2021.

*A video was shown, outlining the findings of a team of four students from the Graduate Institute of Geneva, who had been working with the IPU since March 2021 to research human security as a people-centred and multidimensional approach to foreign policy, recognizing that the root causes of conflict must be targeted at the local level, and that security threats were not only military in nature but also had economic, social, environmental, health and cyber aspects. A human security approach to building and maintaining peace required the involvement of the public in decision-making and policy-making processes; parliaments were critical in that regard. A multisectoral approach to security was essential, and would have major efficiency gains. Parliamentarians must therefore work together across sectors nationally, and cooperate internationally, to create sustainable and lasting, people-centred, context-specific, prevention-oriented security policies.*

**The President** invited Ms. H. Qasas, Head of the Secretariat of the Principles for Peace Initiative, to moderate the expert hearing.

*The Moderator took the Chair.*

**The Moderator** said that the Principles for Peace Initiative, hosted by Interpeace, was the collective effort of 120 organizations and six States supporting an International Commission on Inclusive Peace, with a membership of 12 eminent experts, to rethink the current approach to peace processes and establish a set of principles for peace that would support national and international actors with critical decision-making in that regard. Welcoming and introducing the panellists, she said that Ms. N. Bagayoko, Chair of the African Security Sector Network, was a renowned academic and member of the Principles for Peace Initiative research committee. Mr. B. Koenders, who had been a parliamentarian in the Netherlands for many years and was former United Nations Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, was the Special Envoy of the World Bank on State Fragility and co-Chair of the International Commission on Inclusive Peace. Ms. J. Lilja was Director of Studies, Peace and Development of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and Ms. B. Nepram Mentschel was a human rights activist from Manipur, India and founder of the Control Arms Foundation of India and the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network.

The Standing Committee's decision to draft a resolution on reframing peace processes was particularly timely, given the record high number of active conflicts in the world, and the vast impacts of the consequences of failed peace processes, including mass displacement and polarization, all of which were exacerbated by climate change. Those challenges could not be met without changing the status quo. The panellists would be asked what changes were needed, and how parliamentarians could champion those changes at the national and international levels.

**Mr. B. Koenders** (co-Chair, International Commission on Inclusive Peace, Principles for Peace Initiative) said that parliamentarians, as representatives of the people, had a key role not only in sending military personnel as international peace support, but also as guarantors of peace processes. They had a particular responsibility to consider whether peace agreements were effective, what was missing from them and how they could be strengthened. The Standing Committee's decision to draft a resolution on reframing the approach to peace processes was urgently needed. The situation in Afghanistan had clearly highlighted the failure of and flaws in the dominant approach to stabilization and building peace.

The number of ongoing conflicts around the world was at an all-time high since the Second World War, and continued to increase. On average, post-conflict peace lasted for seven years before conflicts re-erupted and escalated. One in three peace agreements were not implemented seriously. Stabilization missions around the world were being challenged, particularly with regard to their outcomes and results for local populations. The impacts of climate change were increasing susceptibility to conflict, adding to its complexities and exacerbating its impacts.

Relations in the world were fractured, not only between countries but also within countries, as evidenced by geopolitical rivalries, proxy warfare, lack of respect for international humanitarian law, and the exclusivity of peace agreements. Changes in the approach to solving those issues were needed urgently, and must be rooted in strong parliamentary action. Particular consideration should be given to the role and conduct of mediation. Conflict mediation, while essential, traditionally focused exclusively on those who carried weapons. Such an approach, although important, was not sustainable. While it was of course important to engage the parties likely to break a peace agreement, it was also crucial to garner a coalition of those who would implement the peace agreement, including women, young people, civil society groups and organizations, and decentralized entities. Peace deals were often elitist and not sustainable, tending to be established top-down and according to a "one-size-fits-all" model. Elections differed from country to country; they could either launch or mitigate a conflict.

A new approach to peacebuilding was needed, in line with geopolitical change. The Principles for Peace Initiative was therefore working in a thorough, global consultative process with tribal leaders, religious leaders, young people and many others, to consider how to arrive at a charter or covenant that gave real consideration to the roles of international and national players in making peace sustainable. The Principles for Peace would consider how to change peace processes through scientific and political analysis of the nature of conflict, and the legitimacy required to make those processes sustainable. Parliamentarians would have a critical role to play.

**The Moderator** said that the limits of current approaches to stabilization and peacebuilding were particularly apparent in the situation in the Sahel. She asked what key lessons could be learned.

**Ms. N. Bagayoko** (Chair, African Security Sector Network) said that the situation in the Sahel was a prominent example of the failure of the efforts of the international community. The ongoing conflict in Mali was not only the result of a failure of military intervention to contain jihadist movements and other forms of insecurity and violence, it was also a civilian failure. Measures had been taken by the military, the United Nations, and joint G5 forces, as well as a special forces task force acting under the authority of Operation Barkhane, none of which had successfully restored peace; insecurity and violence continued and were expanding. Initially, the conflict had emerged in the north of Mali, broadening to central areas, then spreading into Burkina Faso and Niger, and moving subsequently towards Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Containment had therefore not been successful. Jihadism was not the only type of violence occurring in the region; local militias were also impacting the management of security, and political rebellions were taking place in the north of Chad and northern Mali, areas that were managed by groups that had been signatories to the peace agreement concluded in 2015. The international tools mobilized had failed to address the core issues underlying the conflict, which were not necessarily linked to terrorism or jihadism. The "one-size-fits all" civilian approach, which had been applied, had proven ineffectual, and all established military approaches to counter insurgency had backfired in the local context.

**The Moderator** said that local context was indeed essential; consultations under the Principles for Peace Initiative had all brought to light the need to consider key questions: what constitutes a peace process? When should it start? When should it end? What made peace legitimate in the eyes of the public? How could change be instituted to move beyond the current format for peace processes?

**Ms. J. Lilja** (Director of Studies, Peace and Development, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) said that the notion of peace processes must be broadened to take account of the fact that no society was immune from violent conflict. Armed conflict was the result of accumulated grievances and the capacity for organized violence. It was therefore necessary to be aware of and able to address discontent within society. If people felt excluded from and unheard by formal political processes, violence could easily become their preferred option for gaining attention. The majority of active conflicts in the world, although internal, were being internationalized. As more actors became involved, conflicts became more protracted and more difficult to solve. Unfortunately, there were fewer peace processes under way than armed conflicts.

The potential for conflicts to emerge was expected to escalate as a result of climate change; no society was immune. Peace must therefore be promoted more actively at the local level. If parliaments valued sovereignty and did not wish to see the internationalization of their domestic affairs, they should strengthen their peacemaking skills. Parliaments were present in countries before, during and after conflict, and were expected to function effectively at all stages. Consideration must be given to how to engage in peaceful political dialogue and debate, in particular how to interact with the opposition and address grievances raised by marginalized groups in society, including marginalized majorities such as women and young people. Parliaments therefore had the capacity to relieve pressure by promoting dialogue and preventing and de-escalating conflict, both locally and internationally. Two dimensions of dialogue should be considered: first, engagement between parliamentarians and all sectors of the population in general, to address grievances that might give rise to organized violence if left unaddressed; and second, dialogue within parliaments during sensitive times when the risk of conflict was increasing or conflict was ongoing.

**The Moderator** said that the formula for peacemaking must be changed, moving away from elite bargains and beyond the use of violence as the main currency for negotiations, looking into the ways in which peace could truly be delivered for the people.

**Ms. B. Nepram Mentschel** (human rights defender and founder of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network) said that in Manipur, work for peace had not stemmed from an academic exercise, but rather from the conflict that had been raging for decades. Her 14-year-old niece had died stepping on a bomb planted by an armed insurgent group, which had been intended for a politician. The peace process in Manipur had been born from the people's search for answers. The people of Manipur spoke with a voice of peace, which had been neglected for decades in the ongoing violence. Indeed, the world was witnessing the highest number of armed conflicts since the Second World War, yet there were over 370 forgotten conflicts in the world, still raging, unreported by the media. Many of those conflicts were playing out on indigenous territories, in biodiversity hotspots. Indigenous communities must therefore be included in peace processes and conflict resolution.

Manipur in north-east India was home to 45 million indigenous people. The area was home to South Asia's longest-running conflict. There were 72 armed insurgent groups, and 300,000 military troops deployed. The area was under martial law, which had been in force since 1958. The law, which had been passed by parliamentarians, should not exist in a democracy. Some 50,000 lives had been lost in the conflict in Manipur, and 20,000 women had been widowed. The Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network had been established to protect and defend those women, give them economic empowerment and put food on their tables. The creators of conflict did not become its victims; the victims were the poor and vulnerable, women who did not know how to hold a gun but who had witnessed first-hand the devastation caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region. Those women had been left with nothing, while drugs and guns from other countries had flooded the region, undermining all peacemaking efforts. There were 17 peace talks ongoing in north-east India, none of which involved any women, yet mothers and grandmothers were patrolling the streets of Manipur to ensure the safety and security of their children and grandchildren. Working for peace required research and activism but efforts would never succeed without the engagement of likeminded people in positions of power. Women and indigenous communities must be included.

**The Moderator** agreed that women were strong constituents of peace and that the peacebuilding agenda must be broadened to include them and indigenous communities. She asked what recommendations the panellists wished to make with regard to the aspects for inclusion in the Standing Committee's forthcoming resolution, to anchor the changes advocated by the Principles for Peace Initiative.

**Mr. B. Koenders** (co-Chair, International Commission on Inclusive Peace, Principles for Peace Initiative) said that the current climate was one of mistrust in political institutions and representation; many segments of populations around the world did not feel sufficiently represented in policies or their implementation. Ensuring that all voices were heard and fundamental rights respected was the key to sustainable peace. Parliamentarians had three main roles to play in peace processes. First, mobilizing funds and troops and setting policies for intervention as a catalyst for peace in other countries. Parliaments must ensure that any such intervention at the international level was sustainable in the long term, based on inclusivity and suitably adapted to the local context. Second, parliaments must set standards with regard to establishing the role of the international community in peace processes, who should be included in international consultations and who should be heard, set budgets and ensure the accountability of new governments in post-conflict situations. Governance must be kept in line with the Principles for Peace. Third, parliaments from around the world must engage in exchanges of experience to fully understand the impacts of different policies in different places. Part of peace processes should be set out in national law, set by national legislators to establish how the peace process is intended to help, and to revisit it to assess its effectiveness. Peace processes must be conducted flexibly, under constant assessment and revision through parliamentary processes, to account for the fact that conflict was driven by the need for change.

**Ms. N. Bagayoko** (Chair, African Security Sector Network) said that language was key to peace processes. Too often, peace processes depended on translation of external concepts. Local language and concepts must be given greater prominence, as must the solutions offered by local stakeholders, which were often systematically rejected because they did not resemble international standards or fit with external values and expectations. External players should not simply impose external standards and solutions.

**Ms. J. Lilja** (Director of Studies, Peace and Development, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) said that parliaments should explore and invest in mechanisms and modalities for continuous citizen engagement and feedback between elections, to allow minorities and disadvantaged groups to express their grievances and enable parliamentarians to address them. Consultations, perception surveys, hearings and online engagement, among others, should be conducted regularly, adapted appropriately to the local context. The practices of dialogue in parliaments should be assessed, taking stock of parliamentary procedures and the formats for dialogue and decision-making that had a real impact on looking at critical issues in the country context that could give rise to large-scale violence, including minority rights, language rights, corruption issues and others.

Parliaments also had a key role in overseeing military expenditure and keeping check on how States dealt with the monopoly of violence. Budget literacy among parliamentarians was therefore critical. Consideration should be given to who participated in discussions on military spending; the equal participation of women parliamentarians was crucial. Value for money of those investments should also be considered, along with the trade-offs with other spending on other issues that could also have a bearing on life and death. Parliaments should consider investing in psychosocial well-being, especially in countries with young populations exposed to violence, where there was likely to be high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder. Lastly, climate change and security was a key issue; recommendations could be made in that regard.

**Ms. B. Nepram Mentschel** (human rights defender and founder of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network) said that there was no reason why governments should only negotiate with armed groups. Peace talks should include women's groups and indigenous groups, to hear and understand the people whose voices mattered. Women accounted for more than 50 per cent of the world's population; peace processes could not possibly succeed while women were excluded. Indigenous wisdom held the key to protecting land and resources, and indigenous people therefore had a crucial role to play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The world's forgotten conflicts, which were ignored by the mainstream media, must be taken into account and addressed, otherwise violence would continue. The communities ravaged by such violence were exhausted by it, and must be taken into account as a matter of priority.

**The Moderator** said that there was a clear need to broaden the frame of reference of peace processes, moving away from political settlements in which violence was the main currency in bargaining and negotiations towards an inclusive approach that addressed underlying grievances and expectations and made peace legitimate in the eyes of society. Contextualization was critical if peace was to take root; there was no "one-size-fits-all" approach to peacemaking. Civilian actors should be leveraged. Parliaments should engage not only at the international level through contributions to international peace processes, but also nationally by ensuring appropriate budgeting, transparency and accountability. Parliaments should contribute to the work of the International Commission on Inclusive Peace, and thereby to Principles for Peace, and ensure that those Principles were applied at the national level.

### Remarks by the co-Rapporteurs

*The President, Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain), took the Chair.*

**Ms. C. Widegren** (Sweden), co-Rapporteur, said that parliaments had a crucial role in contributing to peace processes. The co-Rapporteurs would therefore ensure that the resolution to be adopted by the Standing Committee at its next session would constitute a toolbox that was accessible to and usable by all members of parliament who were engaged in matters of peace and security, which could be adapted to local contexts. The purpose of the resolution was to launch a process of engagement for setting sustainable new standards and establishing tools to be used globally both immediately and in the years to come. Peace processes were vulnerable; one missing link could lead to total failure. It was therefore essential to include as many stakeholders as possible from the beginning, to see the broadest context of conflict and craft solutions for lasting peace. The Charter of the United Nations opened with the words, "We, the people". Parliamentarians represented the people. They were therefore responsible for acting for the good of all. Parliaments had an essential role in creating safe and secure conditions for dialogue, discussion and argument, before and during crisis and conflict, in the most inclusive way possible, leaving no-one behind.

Sweden, in its 100 years of democracy, had played a leading role in promoting human rights and the rule of law, both nationally and internationally, with peacebuilding as an integral principle in its foreign policy. While democracy was not a perfect system, it was the strongest foundation for peace and security; if citizens were confident that they could replace their leaders in free and fair elections, they were less inclined to resort to violence. Yet Sweden had a heritage of aggressive war making. Every effort was therefore made now to maintain respect for human rights. After 100 years of democracy, Sweden had transitioned from one of the poorest countries, to a thriving, inclusive society, in which men and women were equally represented, economic reform had succeeded and prosperity had grown. Sweden had open and transparent governance, with respect for the rule of law, strong electoral participation and a vibrant civil society. Sweden's political reforms had resulted in elected representatives working together in bipartisan fashion, tackling challenges together through dialogue and the establishment of commissions of inquiry, to address the concerns of all citizens.

Parliamentarians around the world should learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. Conflicts were on the rise but peace processes were not. Peacebuilding must therefore be reframed for the future. There were several ongoing global crises, which would require cooperation: climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, polarization and conflict had hampered sustainable development. The co-Rapporteurs would welcome all contributions to the draft resolution, which would be prepared in a consultative process, and hoped that it would be approved by the Standing Committee at its next session.

**Ms. A.D. Gomashie** (Ghana), co-Rapporteur in lieu of Mr. Bagbin, said that parliamentarians had sought to build and maintain peace over years, yet conflicts abounded the world over. It was well established that democratic representative institutions had a key part to play in efforts to abate conflict and foster peace. Giving a role in peacemaking to representative institutions and local organizations could only serve to increase the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts and foster sustainable development, which in turn would contribute to addressing the root causes of unrest. Conflicts had multiple dimensions; signing peace deals did not necessarily guarantee the restoration of peace. Culture, identity, ethnicity and race must be taken into consideration. Efforts must be made to "unpack" every conflict: to identify all actors and their interests, which must be properly understood and respected. One size did not fit all in conflict resolution; each conflict had its own unique dynamics. To guarantee sustainability, conflict mediation should be complimented with empowerment, education, and other social measures to reduce tension. Together, the co-Rapporteurs would produce a comprehensive draft resolution that could be used to achieve peace for all and ensure the sustainability of the world for future generations.

### Debate

**Mr. B. Mahtab** (India) said that achieving peace was the greatest and highest goal of all. Conflict bred instability and fear, with catastrophic consequences for individuals and society. Despite all peacebuilding efforts through international agreements and institutions for peace, violence and war prevailed. The approach to peace processes must therefore be reframed. Peaceful coexistence had always been the cornerstone of India's foreign policy, based on mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. India had always responded promptly to United Nations calls for troops for international peacekeeping operations, and was one of the largest contributors in that regard. Terrorism had emerged as a significant challenge for the whole of humanity. India had a zero-tolerance policy, placing high emphasis on international cooperation as the means to tackle terrorism. India was a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. India also gave high priority and commitment to universal non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. In order to achieve peace, the long-term economic and social causes of conflict must be addressed. Resources must be mobilized to that end over the long term. Parliamentarians had a key role to play in that regard. Parliamentary cooperation was essential; the IPU should remain at the centre of efforts to share experiences to build a safer world. Peace was a prerequisite for development, giving hope for a brighter future for humankind.

**Ms. S. Falaknaz** (United Arab Emirates) said that the United Arab Emirates welcomed the discussion and was acutely aware of the challenges and problems confronting peace processes around the world. She asked the experts how parliamentarians could best make use of their legislative, diplomatic and oversight mandates to ensure peace. The Government of the United Arab Emirates did its utmost to support efforts to build peace and human security both internally and externally, by combating extremism and violence and promoting understanding, co-existence and tolerance, respect for human rights and in particular the rights of women and children. The United Arab Emirates was a major contributor to humanitarian assistance without discrimination; efforts in that regard had not waned during the COVID-19 pandemic, with medical assistance provided to more than 135 States. Parliamentary guidelines should be adopted for the promotion of peace, referencing relevant international instruments, mechanisms and oversight processes.

**Mr. M.B.M. Al-Ahbab** (Qatar) said that while political mediation clearly had a key role to play in peace processes, he wished to know whether the experts felt that such mediation would be most effective when organized internally, internationally through the United Nations, or at the regional level with the involvement of neighbouring countries and regional organizations.

**Mr. A. Ware** (Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament) said that the United Nations had outlined the human security approach to peace in General Assembly resolution 66/290, which could be usefully referenced in the draft resolution to ensure coherence between United Nations and IPU documents. There was a common misperception of human security as being in conflict with national or State security. The resolution should therefore foster cohesion between those concepts by including a concept of common security, as outlined in articles 2 and 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, which outlined mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, including negotiation, inquiry, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies and other peaceful means. The concept of common security had been implemented by regional bodies, such as through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Swedish Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, led by Olof Palme. The abolition of nuclear weapons was crucial for advancing human security. Not only was the threat of the use of such weapons a risk to current and future generations, but the high budgets dedicated to nuclear weapons programmes could contribute more significantly to security if diverted to sustainable development and peacemaking.

**Mr. O. Almunawer** (Kuwait) said that peace was fundamental to Islam. When talking of peacekeeping and peacemaking, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East should not be ignored. Such intense and longstanding conflict affected the lives of millions, as people were forced to live in inhuman conditions, with their lands and homes destroyed. No country in the Middle East region was spared the impacts of the conflict. Longstanding conflicts and occupations had been successfully brought to an end in the past, as Ms. Widegren had described. It was easy to lose sight of the situation in Palestine simply because it had been ongoing for so long. The occupation must end, and the rights of the people must be restored to bring peace to the region.

**Mr. J.V. Ndouma Mbadinga** (Gabon) said that article 2, paragraph 3 of the Charter of the United Nations called on all Member States to resolve conflicts through peaceful means. The question was whether peace depended on relations between States, or whether it stemmed from respect for local populations, since local populations suffered from the differences that prevailed across the world. Upstream solutions must be found to mitigate conflict; weapons were not produced in Africa, yet the continent was home to a large number of active conflicts. Who was supplying those weapons? It was imperative to listen to the views of local stakeholders to prevent the further spread of conflicts and to build peace, since they knew best how local tensions arose at the local level and how conflicts escalated as a result. Parliamentarians, as the voice of the people, must be truly representative; too often, parliaments spoke only for the ruling party, rather than being able to speak freely and decide freely on behalf of the people. A strong resolution from the Standing Committee was therefore essential.

**Mr. A. Touizi** (Morocco) said that the large number of active armed conflicts in the world was testament to the fact that peacebuilding measures were failing. Efforts, whether international, regional or local, had not succeeded. The conflict between Palestine and Israel, for example, had been raging for decades. Longstanding conflicts persisted in other regions as well, and new conflicts were emerging in many countries. The causes of conflict were not always cross-border, but also included ethnic division within countries, often a legacy of colonialism. The impacts of climate change were also a factor in fuelling local unrest. Consideration must be given to who the sources of weapons were in such cases, as conflicts tended to be made by those who manufactured weapons. Ceasing the arms trade would bring an end to conflict and proxy wars. The sending and transfer of arms to conflict hotspots should be sanctioned. Vulnerable countries were being manipulated by superpowers, which benefitted from the arms trade. Peacebuilding must work across borders and must tackle the root causes of conflict, defending the rights of the vulnerable and deprived, and bringing to justice the perpetrators of war, whose actions instigated and fuelled conflicts and destabilized nations.

**Mr. J. Cepeda** (Spain) said that the world was witnessing numerous active conflicts, which had been ongoing for many years, between armed groups, which had resulted in significant numbers of lives lost, vast material damage and millions of people suffering. Conflict was evolving alongside societal development; digital development was allowing new means of disseminating hatred and inciting violence through social networks, which was giving rise to new approaches to conflict. Cybercrime and attacks on computer systems and networks were also forms of warfare. Those risks must be assessed thoroughly and given due consideration in peacebuilding measures for the future. Parliamentarians must work together, particularly by building legislation and cooperating on intelligence, to ensure that cross-border disinformation and misuse of digital networks for incitement of hatred were addressed globally. A forward-looking approach was needed to consider how conflicts would be likely to evolve over the coming 50 years in increasingly digitalized societies. Parliamentarians must prepare robust legislative frameworks to face the challenges posed by the dissemination of terrorism using mobile technologies and digital networks.

**Mr. M.S. Alabrach** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Charter of the United Nations, which had defined the scope of peace and security, had allowed certain States to consider themselves the forefathers of peace. The Syrian cause was one of several, however, in which the United Nations Security Council had failed. War and terror continued to reign, and the people of Syria were suffering, with no respect for their human rights. Every effort had been made at the local level to push the terrorists out of Syrian territory. A multilateral dialogue was needed to facilitate reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The challenges weighed heavily on all sides, and were exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Conflicts must be overcome and peace built at the local level, with the involvement of vulnerable segments of the population, in particular young people and women.

**Mr. B. Koenders** (co-Chair, International Commission on Inclusive Peace, Principles for Peace Initiative) said that the overwhelming message from the discussion had been the urgent need to consider new types of conflict, new dynamics in geopolitics, and new developments in arms exchanges and exports, all of which were evolving rapidly, while internal conflicts were also becoming increasingly complex and more difficult to resolve. The principles and practices of peacemaking must therefore be considered carefully. Parliamentarians had the potential to influence peacebuilding, adapting it to evolving conflict situations and ensuring that peace processes were more inclusive and sustainable.

National contributions to United Nations peacekeeping forces were essential; parliaments had a key role in sending troops with a proper mandate and appropriate monitoring and control. Stabilization missions must, however, be made more flexible and inclusive, and must be based on local dialogue with the engagement of women and young people. Peace deals tended to be elitist and focused on those who carried weapons; peace could not be sustainable if the people did not benefit from it. The International Commission on Inclusive Peace was striving for evidence-based change to peacebuilding, encouraging parliaments to look at where and why peacekeeping stabilization missions were not working, such as in Afghanistan, and identifying problems sooner. Greater consideration must be given by national parliaments to budgeting, accountability and monitoring of their national involvement in stabilization activities. In Mali, peace negotiations had included a wide variety of groups. Yet despite diversity and inclusivity in the national dialogue, the decisions had not been implemented. Parliament had a key role in ensuring not only inclusivity, but implementation of decisions. To that end, it was essential that the political opposition was included in discussions on the modalities for implementing peace processes.



The United Nations, in its current form, was weak; the Security Council was divided, unrepresentative, and in need of reform. In most conflicts, international humanitarian law was being flouted and there was no respect for peace processes, leading to futile negotiations and short-term deals that were met with a lack of interest and retrenchment. Longstanding conflicts, such as the situation in Palestine, showed that problems did not go away if left unaddressed. The concerns of citizens must be met, through local and regional involvement in negotiations, to ensure that the root causes of conflict were addressed. Decisions on whether peacekeeping efforts should come from the local level, neighbouring countries or international entities could only be made on a case-by-case basis. In proxy wars, neighbouring countries must be part of the solution, whereas in other situations, neighbours were fuelling conflict. New technologies and the abuse of social media must indeed be taken into account. Approaches to building peace must be based on truth, fact and scientific evidence.

**Ms. N. Bagayoko** (Chair, African Security Sector Network) said that while practical solutions were important, so were the principles on which they were based. The world was in a state of rupture, requiring a rethinking of tools and instruments for building peace, which had been proven insufficient to address longstanding conflicts, such as the situation in Palestine, and inadequate for dealing with contemporary conflicts. The failure of the stabilization process in Afghanistan had been the failure of a joint civilian and military system, and constituted a clear indication that it required change. All parties had a right to see positive results from such processes, and those who contributed financially and militarily deserved to see a return on their investments for peace. Local perspectives must remain central to peacekeeping efforts, with every conflict considered separately, on a case-by-case basis, and consider the role of all contributing factors, such as climate change, in each particular situation. The role of parliamentarians must be considered carefully, and parliamentary oversight must be strengthened with regard to monitoring the application of foreign policy and policies on the transfer of weapons and technologies.

**Ms. B. Nepram Mentschel** (human rights defender and founder of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network) said that the passion and commitment reflected in the debate brought hope in spite of situations of conflict and global pandemic. With regard to what could be done to revise peacekeeping processes, the adoption, at the national level, of resolutions on women, peace and security, as had been done in India, would be particularly beneficial for ensuring inclusive peace. Each year, the world's governments spent a total of US\$ 2 trillion on military activity, which equated to financing the United Nations Department of Peace Operations for 400 years. Parliaments must monitor spending and prevent the funding of conflicts. The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council had failed to protect world peace. That situation must change, with a reform of the Security Council. Peace could not exist without justice; reparation for victims and survivors of war was essential, and whistleblowers must be protected. Peace could not be made in international hubs, but rather should be sought locally, in conflict-affected areas. The international arms trade and weapons transfers must be stemmed; the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council produced 88 per cent of the world's weapons, which were being used in conflicts all over the world, causing the loss of many lives.

**Ms. J. Lilja** (Director of Studies, Peace and Development, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) said that violent extremist groups took root in places with pre-existing local grievances. Those grievances must therefore be taken seriously; parliament had a key role, as the voice of the local population. Investment in social sectors was particularly important, and budgets must be set with the equal participation of women and men in parliament. The question of whether external involvement in peace negotiations was necessary and beneficial depended on the individual context of the conflict in question, and must therefore be decided on a case-by-case basis. The key to successful mediation in any form was to ensure that the mediator was trusted by all parties to the conflict. The type of mediation required could also evolve with the context of the conflict: local mediation may be sufficient initially, while international assistance might be required for the implementation of a peace agreement. Cybercrime and the use of technologies and social media were indeed a significant threat and required attention.

**Ms. A.D. Gomashie** (Ghana), co-Rapporteur, said that the debate had shown the need for change in approaches to peacebuilding, and had underscored the importance of funding measures to boost social inclusion, and to rehabilitate victims of conflict. Healing was crucial, and peace could not be sustained without justice.

**Ms. C. Widegren** (Sweden), co-Rapporteur, thanked all participants for their contributions and welcomed the clear commitment expressed towards reframing peace processes. The co-Rapporteurs would endeavour to draft a concise and focused resolution, highlighting good, clear examples of ways in which parliaments and parliamentarians could take action. The draft resolution would be disseminated to members of the Standing Committee in January 2022, for the submission of proposed amendments in February, in time for the Standing Committee's next scheduled session in March.

**The President** thanked all participants for their contributions.

*The sitting rose at 17:45.*

### **SITTING OF MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER**

(Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 14:45 with Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain), President of the Standing Committee, in the Chair.*

#### **Panel discussion on the theme *Parliament's role in addressing the risks of diversion in arms transfers***

*A video message was shown from Mr. L. Gberie, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations Office at Geneva and President of the Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, in which he said that the core thematic focus of the Sierra Leone Presidency of the Arms Trade Treaty had been strengthening efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ensuring efficient stockpile management, with the main objective of promoting proper regulation of the international trade in conventional arms as part of the global framework for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Weapons legally acquired by States too often came to be used by forces for which they had not been intended. Illicit transfers and diversions from official stockpiles had become a significant aspect in conventional arms regulation in many countries, particularly in Africa. Political will and the commitment of the international community on the matter had proven strong.*

*The Sierra Leone Presidency had focused on engaging all States Parties and other stakeholders in linking Treaty implementation with the global framework for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Areas had been identified in which further action was required to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and strengthen stockpile management and security; all stakeholders were encouraged to implement that guidance and use existing international and regional tools in their efforts to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Measures had been taken to engage with States that were not yet party to the Treaty, including a joint project developed with the IPU to raise parliamentary awareness of the Treaty and encourage further ratifications. States Parties and signatories had reaffirmed their commitment to transparency and information sharing by establishing the the Diversion Information Exchange Forum to share concrete and operational information about cases of suspected or detected diversion.*

**The President** introduced the Moderator for the expert panel, Mr. A. Ware, Global Coordinator for Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND). PNND, together with the IPU and other organizations had prepared a new parliamentary handbook, *Assuring Our Common Future: A guide to parliamentary action in support of disarmament for security and sustainable development*.

*The Moderator took the Chair.*

**The Moderator** said that the Arms Trade Treaty was one of several mechanisms for addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and diversion in arms transfers. The use of all available mechanisms must be optimized. Numerous resources were also available specifically for parliamentarians. The online disarmament handbook, as previously mentioned by the President of the Standing Committee, was available at [www.disarmamenthandbook.org](http://www.disarmamenthandbook.org), which contained specific sections on conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons and inhumane weapons. He introduced the three panellists, Mr. R. del Picchia, former French Senator and former member of the IPU Executive Committee, Ms. K. Olofsson, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and Ms. B. Nepram Mentschel, a human rights defender and founder of the Control Arms Foundation of India and the Manipur Women Gun Survivors' Network.

**Mr. R. del Picchia** (France) said that focus tended to be placed on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, yet the fear with regard to those weapons was mostly in people's minds, since such weapons were not in general use. Small arms and light weapons, on the other hand, were killing around 500,000 people per year. Consideration must be given to how and why there were so many small arms and light weapons in circulation around the world, in the hands of criminals, terrorists and revolutionaries. Weapons that had been used in conflicts for years were traded onward after conflicts had ended. The illegal trade in "second-hand" weapons constituted a serious threat to peace. Despite the fight against trafficking, which had been ongoing for over 30 years, the risks remained high and trafficking in weapons remained a serious problem, which could culminate in crimes against humanity or even genocide. The illegal circulation of such weapons must be addressed to guarantee not only public safety but also political security.

The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime Treaty Series (2001) had recently been ratified by France and Germany, which were two of the world's most significant producers of weapons. While that was a positive step, the Protocol was the only legally binding agreement against the circulation of such weapons and was not sufficient. More needed to be done to prevent the illegal transfer of such weapons. Public discourse on the matter remained limited. The IPU was taking the matter very seriously, and was taking measures to raise parliamentary awareness and promote universal ratification of the Protocol. More ratifications would mean fewer illicit weapons and less trafficking, and would make the world a safer and better place for all. Parliamentarians must show greater commitment and willingness to work together to eliminate backstreet weapons markets, control the diversion of weapons and ensure tangible results. Legislation and its implementation were key. Every parliament must play its part. The task ahead was complex, so time must not be wasted.

**Ms. K. Olofsson** (Secretary-General, Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons) said that the Forum was a membership organization, focused specifically on the prevention and reduction of violence related to the use of small arms and light weapons. The Forum had been constituted for parliamentarians by parliamentarians working on human security, sustainable development and peacebuilding. The illicit flow of small arms and light weapons was a significant problem for individuals, societies and the world as a whole. The Forum, founded in 2002 at the initiative of Latin American parliaments, Spain and Sweden, brought together 300 parliamentarians from 100 countries, to cooperate on capacity-building, policymaking and awareness raising. The Forum intended to bridge the national, regional and global levels, and ensure gender mainstreaming in all thematic content. The Forum worked to foster parliamentary engagement in international frameworks on disarmament, including the Arms Trade Treaty, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda of the United Nations Security Council, as well as work with regional parliamentary assemblies. The Forum had been proud to be a co-sponsor of the aforementioned parliamentary handbook on disarmament and was looking forward to its implementation.

The diversion of small arms and light weapons was a key international security concern. The illicit proliferation of those weapons constituted a serious violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. Despite the robust body of international mechanisms and tools for disarmament, which contained provisions on the topic, the term "diversion" still had no universally accepted definition. Globally, around 550,000 illicit firearms had been seized in 2016 and 2017; 54 per cent of homicides were conducted with firearms. Diversion was a major contributor to the illicit transfer of those weapons. It was a complex problem, requiring a complex solution. The legislative role of parliamentarians was therefore crucial, both through the ratification of international treaties and the formulation of national legislation that reflected international obligations. National legislation on diversion must be revised regularly, to reflect the ever-changing nature of weapons diversion, particularly where small arms and light weapons were concerned and the fast pace of technological developments.

Where diversion had been documented or indicated, parliaments must hold governments accountable, by questioning and calling for change. Parliamentarians also had an awareness-raising role and should promote open and constructive dialogue with the executive and relevant ministries on the importance of avoiding diversion and how to strengthen systems to prevent it. As representatives of their constituencies, parliamentarians must ensure that the international legal framework was translated into a reality on the ground, to reduce human suffering. When considering arms transfers that might incur a risk of diversion, parliamentarians could consider the particularities of those risks and provide clear political analysis to the government agencies concerned. Capacity-building activities and information sharing could be organized to discuss diversion risks, and lessons could be drawn from previous experience. The input of civil society was also crucial to bring national and regional perspectives, and experiences from the ground.

Parliamentary groups, caucuses and networks could be established to focus specifically on diversion and the application of international frameworks such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and support the work of relevant parliamentary committees. Cooperation at the national, regional and international levels was critical, and the IPU had a key role in facilitating further dialogue. The Diversion Information Exchange Forum under the aegis of the Arms Trade Treaty was particularly important in that regard. Parliamentarians had the tools and opportunities to join forces with other actors to support efforts to tackle diversion and support the universalization and implementation of relevant instruments, and to demonstrate the political will to end armed violence to reduce human suffering. A social media campaign was currently running to raise awareness of weapons diversion; all participants in the meeting were encouraged to join the campaign.

**The Moderator** said that education and awareness raising were as important as action. The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons was playing a key role in that regard. The debate to follow would afford an excellent opportunity to share examples and experiences of parliamentary action, which could provide inspiration and guidance. Tackling diversion of small arms and light weapons was not simply a numbers game; it would dramatically reduce human suffering.

**Ms. B. Nepram Mentschel** (human rights defender and founder of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors' Network) said that she wished to begin by paying tribute to Air Commodore J. Singh, former Director of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, and Lieutenant General B.S. Malik, both of whom had been leaders in the fight against the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons, and who had mentored her in understanding the dynamics and seriousness of the problem, which was eroding safety and security the world over. She had been born in Manipur, north-east India, an area deeply affected by conflict, where the population was caught between the guns of State and non-State actors. Some 50,000 lives had been lost in Manipur, and 20,000 women had been widowed. The vast amount of violence in Manipur, and indeed around the world, had led to her founding the Manipur Women Gun Survivors' Network and the Control Arms Foundation of India, as well as publishing *South Asia's Fractured Frontier: Armed Conflict, Narcotics and Small Arms Proliferation in India's North East*.

The activities of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors' Network were based on the premise that violence affected the poorest of the poor, and that disarmament must be tackled on the ground, focusing on building women's businesses, supporting their financial independence, enabling them to open bank accounts and providing social and psychological support. The Network brought together women from the various states of north-east India. Weapons were taking their children's lives, and the already extremely difficult situation was being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The women's movement was strong, however, and could serve as an example to the world on galvanizing for arms control to ensure peaceful communities where children could go to school, democracies were safe and people could build peaceful, prosperous and dignified lives. The Network was working at the national level with parliamentarians in Delhi, and at the international level with the United Nations, in an effort to raise awareness and share experiences and best practices.

Much had been done at the international level, including the adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the Arms Trade Treaty, yet those instruments were not enough. Disarmament campaigns and negotiations had been ongoing for many years, yet over 100 companies in 90 countries continued to produce arms and ammunition. In Manipur, a bullet could be purchased for 10 rupees, and a hand grenade for 250 rupees. Young children were taking possession of weapons. The violence had destabilized the whole community. The producers of 88 per cent of the world's weapons were permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The vast majority of the world's weapons were in the hands of State actors. Parliaments must therefore hold their governments to account. The rise of authoritarian regimes was increasing instability; 80 per cent of the world's wars were in the global south, as were 80 per cent of the world's refugees. For every US\$ 1 received from the global north on humanitarian aid, US\$ 10 was spent paying the global north for weapons.

In the current status quo, the global north continued to set standards to which the global south was expected to adhere. That situation must be redressed. Countries of the global south must be given leadership in their own national, human and common security. The voices of the global south were not heard in global disarmament negotiations. The issues of non-State armed groups must be included in the Arms Trade Treaty. Globally, over the past year, US\$ 2 trillion had been spent on military expenses and US\$ 75 billion on nuclear capacity, while only US\$ 25 million had been spent on vaccinating the world against COVID-19. Parliamentarians had a key role in budgeting, and ensuring that taxpayers' money was spent on safety and security. Global disarmament must be reconsidered; parliaments must put people and human security at the heart of all efforts in that regard. Greater resources must be allocated to nongovernmental organizations in the global south. They must be sufficiently funded to make societies safer. Humanitarian aid must be distributed more equitably, with survivors and victims on the ground being made a priority. Women must be involved in peace and security measures; if women were unsafe, everyone was unsafe. Peacekeeping and disarmament must serve the whole of society, in particular the most vulnerable.

**The Moderator** thanked the panellists for their contributions.

### Debate

*The President, Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain), took the Chair.*

**Mr. A. Al Aifan** (Arab Parliament) said that the increase in conflict over recent decades had shown the growing threats associated with the dissemination of weapons and their illegal use. The situation was particularly serious in the Arab region. The lack of clear information and a comprehensive database on the existence and circulation of small arms and light weapons was particularly worrying. International weapons controls must therefore be strengthened to ensure that weapons did not end up in the hands of extremist groups. Parliaments had a critical role in that regard by, among others, legislating against the proliferation of such weapons, and encouraging governments to strengthen cross-border cooperation to share information and experiences. Every country's capacities to eliminate the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons must be strengthened.

**Mr. H. Naderi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Islamic Republic of Iran was an active supporter of all instruments for disarmament, and in particular international standards to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The efficient, complete and non-discriminatory implementation of the Programme of Action as a non-binding and voluntary instrument could mitigate impacts of the diversion of such weapons on human life and sustainable development. The diversion of conventional weapons to unauthorized recipients posed a significant threat to civilians around the world. Parliamentarians had a crucial role in tackling that threat by legislating against the illegal transfer of such weapons. Major arms manufacturers had a particular responsibility to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons; States producing and exporting weapons did so for commercial gain, regardless of the consequences. They must be held to account. Illegal imports must also be tackled. International cooperation, collective measures and common understanding were needed to tackle challenges related to diversions in arms transfers.

**Mr. O. Almunower** (Kuwait) said that global figures on conflict, weapons and deaths were alarming. The increase in illicit economies, in particular the arms trade, had weighed heavily on international security. Coordinated international efforts were needed to rectify the situation. The dangers associated with the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in particular were increasing daily, spreading fear and destabilizing societies. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime had reported that revolvers were the most used weapon in the world. Small arms and light weapons were being used by terrorist groups and militias to gain power around the world. Kuwait had made significant efforts to bring an end to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and was committed to the United Nations Programme of Action. The Parliament of Kuwait had passed significant legislation on arms control at the national level.

**Mr. B. Mahtab** (India) said that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons was a matter of concern to the whole international community, which was complex and multidimensional and therefore had a cross-cutting impact on development, security, humanitarian and socioeconomic aspects of societies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledged the link between arms regulation and development. Conventional weapons became more sinister and lethal in the hands of terrorists, who used them indiscriminately to target innocent civilians. The illicit use of weapons by non-State actors constituted a violation of State sovereignty. For several decades, India had been suffering from cross-border terrorism and violence caused by terrorist groups. Such groups could not exist without the sponsorship and support of States, which must be condemned unequivocally.

India attached high priority to the United Nations Programme of Action and supported efforts to strengthen its implementation and the application of the International Tracing Instrument, including through national legislative measures and the enforcement of export controls, information sharing and capacity building. Strong mechanisms were in place at the national level, including strict export controls on all munitions. The Government of India reported regularly on its implementation of the Programme of Action under the International Tracing Instrument and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. A stringent national legislative framework was in place to regulate arms manufacture, acquisition, possession, trade, licensing and marketing, including prohibitions and punishment. Parliamentarians had a key role in contributing to the prevention of diversion in arms transfers, through legislation, oversight and awareness raising. Coordinated and focused global action was needed to combat illicit trade in and diversion of weapons.

**Mr. V. Gerengo N'vene** (Democratic Republic of Congo) said that the Democratic Republic of Congo had known ongoing armed conflict since 1994. The diversion of weapons was a sensitive issue. Parliaments had a limited role; while they could legislate, they could not guarantee implementation of and respect for the law. There were three interconnected aspects to the weapons trade: production, transfer and use. While there was some regulation, traceability, which was essential to distinguish between legal and illegal ownership and use, was lacking at all three stages. Most often, focus was placed on the consequences of the transfer of weapons, rather than considering the links between the three aspects. Furthermore, the circulation of weapons should be given particular consideration in States that bordered areas of armed conflict. The international community could engage all neighbouring communities in dialogue to seek solutions, and address the three aspects of weapons dissemination.

**Ms. S. Falaknaz** (United Arab Emirates) said that the illicit transfer of weapons constituted a substantial threat to peace and security. Parliaments had at their disposal the legislative and diplomatic tools to decrease the threats caused by those weapons. Parliaments must therefore uphold their responsibilities in that regard. Cooperation must be ensured between all stakeholders and relevant institutions at all levels, to establish a strong network to overcome the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. In the United Arab Emirates, trade in weapons was closely regulated and a decree had been enacted at the State level in 2013 listing the ammunition, weapons and military equipment that could be purchased and who may be issued licences. The United Arab Emirates was party to the Arms Trade Treaty.

**Mr. J. Razarindriatsara** (Madagascar) said that Madagascar was not shielded from the threats of small arms and light weapons; a coup d'état had been attempted from outside the country only a few months previously. Systematic, universal, legislative and political cooperation was essential between countries to address the threat of the illicit proliferation of such weapons. The international market for illegal weapons threatened democracy, peace and stability.

**Mr. J.V. Ndouma Mbadinga** (Gabon) said that the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons constituted a severe threat to international peace and security. The diversion of such weapons impacted the effectiveness of efforts to control their circulation and to regulate the international arms trade in line with international laws and standards. The international community had focused on eliminating trafficking in weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, the diversion of which continued to put lives in danger. The illegal transfer of such weapons, manifested through their theft and resale, led to corruption and could result in poorly protected weapons stocks falling into the wrong hands in exchange for natural resources. Parliamentarians must legislate against the illegal trade in such weapons. International sanctions must be imposed against traffickers, sellers and buyers. The lack of a unified and universally agreed definition of diversion must be rectified, since it created legislative loopholes that made regulation of the situation and application of the Arms Trade Treaty particularly difficult.

**Ms. A. Shkrum** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine fully supported the object and purpose of the Arms Trade Treaty, which it had ratified in 2014, despite the annexation and occupation of 7 per cent of Ukrainian territory. Further ratifications were needed, however, since two of the world's five major weapons exporters were still not party to the Treaty. Consideration must be given to how to do more to encourage those ratifications and the universalization of the Treaty. The Government of Ukraine reported annually on small arms and light weapons to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and was committed to upholding its commitments in that regard. A recent report by Conflict Armament Research, entitled *Weapons of the War in Ukraine*, documented numerous examples of weapons, originating from the Russian Federation, recovered in Ukraine's occupied territory in the period 2018–2021, which was a particularly difficult situation for the Government of Ukraine to regulate. In 1994, Ukraine had given up its nuclear arsenal, which had been one of the largest in the world, and had been proud to do so. Unfortunately, the annexation of Ukraine constituted a failure to respect the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances; the people of Ukraine were therefore concerned for their security and there was a growing sentiment that the abandonment of the nuclear arsenal had been a mistake. Such an example did not bode well for the future of disarmament.

**Mr. T.M. Mnangagwa** (Zimbabwe) said that, in line with the Arms Trade Treaty, States parties must take measures to prevent the diversion of conventional weapons through a national control system. Parliaments had a responsibility to ensure that their governments upheld that commitment. Zimbabwe had ratified the Treaty in 2014. The Southern African Development Community had adopted a revised arms protocol, in line with Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4 on significantly reducing illicit financial and arms flows by 2030. Parliaments must enact legislation to counter weapons diversion and its impact on national development. Legislators must be willing to take up the challenge to bring world peace by eliminating weapons diversion, through shared determination and collective effort. Nations with significant arms manufacturing industry continued to benefit from conflict; there could not be development without peace. People were suffering. Parliamentarians must bring the agenda on arms control, transfer, disarmament and non-proliferation to the forefront of their activities; they had a vital role to play when debating new policies and legislation in that regard.

**Mr. W. David** (United Kingdom) said that, according to recent United Nations research, three-quarters of the world's small arms and light weapons were in the hands of civilians. Grassroots mechanisms were therefore needed to control the production and sale of such weapons. The root causes of public desire to own such weapons must be investigated and addressed. Parliaments had a heavy duty to bear in that regard; legislation and controls must be put in place at the national level to tackle the problem at source.

**Ms. B. Nepram Mentschel** (human rights defender and founder of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors' Network) said that 50 per cent of States that manufactured small arms and light weapons were not present in the current meeting and were not parties to the relevant treaties. The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council produced 88 per cent of the world's weapons. Parliaments must hold those States to account for the arms trafficking and transfers. Efforts must be made to promote universal ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. Ratification was a question of accountability and ensuring that communities were safe. Meetings on disarmament should be moved from Geneva, New York and London to the global south, where conflict was a daily reality, and peace negotiations should include local communities.

**Ms. K. Olofsson** (Secretary-General, Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons) said that the debate had reflected a clear commitment to international frameworks to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Universal ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty was essential; those that had not yet ratified it were encouraged to do so. China's recent ratification had demonstrated that progress was indeed possible. The world's remaining largest arms exporters should also work towards acceding to the Treaty. The commitment of the global parliamentary community was appreciated.

**Mr. R. del Picchia** (France) said that the commitment expressed to international cooperation and action was particularly welcome. The global parliamentary community must work together to build a better world and end human suffering. Transparency was key. Weapons producers must be encouraged to act with transparency and integrity, in particular through certification schemes and traceability of weapons, to foster trust and security.

**The Moderator** urged all parliaments to maintain dialogue and communication, to end the illicit trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

### **Elections**

#### **(a) Elections to fill existing vacancies on the Bureau**

**The President** said that there were three vacancies on the Bureau. The following nominations had been received: Mr. Z.M. Galadima (Nigeria) for the African Group; Ms. H. Hakobyan (Armenia) for the Eurasia Group; and Ms. C. Cano Córdoba (Panama) for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean. With regard to the re-election of Bureau members from France and Qatar, Mr. M. Al-Ahbab (Qatar) would serve a second term, while Mr. E. Blanc (France) would serve the second term in lieu of Mr. P. Dallier (France). Mr. A. Touizi (Morocco) would complete the first term of Mr. D. El Idrissi (Morocco). In the absence of any comments or objections, the President took it that the Standing Committee wished to approve those nominations to the Bureau.

*It was so decided.*

#### **(b) Election of the President and Vice-President of the Committee**

**The President** said that, in line with Rule 7.5 of the Rules of the Standing Committees, the Chairs of the geopolitical groups had decided on the rotation of the presidencies of the Standing Committees until 2033, agreeing that the positions of President and Vice-President should be shared equally between women and men, and that, over a given period, each geopolitical group should have the opportunity to chair each Standing Committee. For 2022–2023, the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security had been allocated the Arab Group for its presidency, and the Eurasia Group for its vice-presidency. Candidatures had been received from the Eurasia Group for Ms. H. Hakobyan (Armenia) for the position of Vice-President and from the Arab Group for Mr. M.B.M. Al-Ahbab (Qatar) for the position of President. In the absence of any comments or objections, he took it that the Standing Committee wished to approve those nominations.

*It was so decided.*

**Mr. M. Al-Ahbab** (Qatar) thanked the Standing Committee for having elected him as its President and expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Echániz for his diligent leadership of the Standing Committee in the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Any other business**

**The President** said that the Bureau had proposed that sessions of the Standing Committee at the 144th IPU Assembly be allocated to the resolution. Thanking the Standing Committee for its support over the course of his mandate, he said it had been an honour to serve as President.

*The sitting rose at 16:40.*



## Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

### SITTING OF SATURDAY, 27 NOVEMBER

(Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 09:00 with Mr. W. William (Seychelles), Member of the Standing Committee Bureau, in the Chair.*

#### Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

#### Approval of the summary record of the Committee's virtual session held during the 142nd IPU Assembly (April/May 2021)

*The summary record was approved.*

#### Launch of the IPU publication on SDG budgeting

**Ms. K. Jabre** (Director of the Division of Programmes, IPU) said that the IPU was launching a new tool entitled *Guidelines for parliamentarians on budgeting for the SDGs: Making the most of public resources*. The COVID-19 pandemic had led to the worst economic recession in 90 years. It had dramatically set back progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and affected all aspects of financing for development. Many countries were redirecting their funds away from longer term development objectives to more immediate recovery measures. Yet, achieving the SDGs was even more crucial now than at their inception.

The process for maximizing financing for development had many components. It was necessary to: (a) mobilize domestic and international financial resources, (b) harness the role of the private sector, (c) maximize the use of innovative financing sources and mechanisms, (d) make the best use of financing.

Members of Parliament were key in ensuring that funding was invested effectively in support of sustainable development. Not only were they responsible for translating the SDGs into legislation and monitoring their implementation but also for making sure that governments were held accountable on how resources were spent. However, there had been limited focus on providing parliamentarians with the knowledge and capacity needed to do the job well. The new guidelines aimed to fill that gap by outlining issues related to budgeting, monitoring and policy choices for the SDGs.

A thoughtful review of a country's budgeting practices and regular communication with all relevant stakeholders was needed to make the most of limited public resources. Countries must understand the sources of funding available to them and consider different strategies on how to best prioritize. Adequate funds should be devoted to the SDGs and domestic plans and policies should account for the most vulnerable. The guidelines would provide parliamentarians with key information on SDG budgeting topics, current challenges and ways to identify concrete actions.

In conclusion, the SDGs could only be achieved if countries introduced efficient financial systems that worked for all. Parliaments had a crucial role to play in ensuring that adequate financing instruments and approaches were adopted.

**Mr. C. Chauvel** (Global Lead and Asia-Pacific Focal Point, Inclusive Processes and Institutions, United Nations Development Fund (UNDP)) said that UNDP was delighted to have been involved in the production of the guidelines. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had estimated that an additional US\$ 2.5 trillion per year in investment were required to fully achieve the SDGs. However, since the pandemic, that figure had risen to US\$ 4.2 trillion. There was an urgent need for more overseas development assistance, more foreign direct investment, more philanthropic assistance, and new sources and tools for investment, such as green climate bonds and Islamic finance. It was a new era for development finance that was no longer about borrowing, spending and taxation. Parliaments must have the tools to scrutinize the new tools, make sure they appeared on the national budget, and create a receptive rather than hostile domestic regulatory finance climate. They also needed strong and systemic partnerships with civil society and national oversight bodies to ensure that public investment was effective and efficient. Parliamentary oversight of the national budget must be fit for purpose to implement the SDGs. For example, gender markers should be required of every department and agency. The markers could then be replicated for all other marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities. All pieces of legislation should have regulatory impact statements. The new guidelines provided information on all of the above matters.

**The Chair** urged delegates to use the guidelines in their budget appropriation work.

**Debate on the theme *Leveraging Information and Communication Technology as an enabler for the education sector, including in times of pandemic***

**The Chair** introduced the Committee's next resolution, entitled *Leveraging Information and Communication Technology as an enabler for the education sector, including in times of pandemic*.

**Ms. I. Kharkova** (Associate Project Officer, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), expert, speaking via video link and accompanying her comments with a digital slide presentation, said that technological innovations had reshaped the way people lived and learned, with digital literacy and access becoming basic rights in the 21st century. However, technology was not neutral. All educational stakeholders must know how to make ethical, equitable, inclusive and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning.

ICT had many uses in education. It was a medium used to provide educational programmes and thus expand educational opportunities. It was a pedagogical tool used by teachers and learners to improve the relevance and quality of teaching and learning processes. It could also help users to develop digital skills. Technology should be used to facilitate education, enable access to information, develop connections, and create teaching and learning processes that were better organized. However, teaching and learning should not be driven by technology. Teachers and learners should be at the core of any technological intervention.

A number of international instruments recognized the importance of ICT. The SDGs, particularly SDG 4, called for inclusive and equitable access to educational opportunities. It was widely believed that ICT had an important role to play in achieving SDG 4. The Qingdao Declaration outlined the potential of ICT and the main areas to which it could contribute. The Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Education offered guidance on how best to respond to the opportunities and challenges brought on by AI. The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation laid out ways to advance a safer, more equitable digital world. It was not only about the use of technology in education but also about partnerships and cooperation in all sectors.

There was no doubt that digital technology could improve lives, including in the area of education. ICT could provide new, flexible ways to access teaching and learning content and enable teaching and learning that was less dependent on location. Such benefits could be particularly important for the most marginalized children or for students living in conflict-affected areas. ICT held the potential to enhance the quality of learning. For instance, it could be used to support the acquisition of digital literacy competencies, encourage active and problem-based learning and promote new pedagogies. ICT could also be used to offer more flexible learning platforms with personal learning pathways that integrated formal and non-formal learning. Lastly, ICT could provide data about learners as well as their behaviours and achievements which could, in turn, inform evidenced-based policy and practices. It was, however, important to ensure the secure and ethical use of data and learners' confidentiality.

Despite the potential of technology, the world continued to face a digital divide with digital exclusion being particularly acute in low-income countries. Certain values should therefore be kept in mind. First, it was important to promote digital inclusion in education. Equity and gender equality in access to digital devices and connectivity should be a prerequisite for all ICT in education policies. Women and girls were all too often prevented from using ICT, particularly the internet. Second, a humanistic approach was needed. Technology should be in service of teachers and learners and must not undermine human rights. A critical view was necessary to mitigate the negative impacts of ICT. For example, it was vital to avoid techno-solutionism (the false assumption that social problems could be solved through technology alone) as well as to bear in mind that many ICT innovations were driven by commercial interests rather than the common good. Third, there was a need to create ecosystems which integrated technology, digital content and digital skills with the capacities of teachers and policy makers to build resilient education systems.

Many governments had been swift in their response to COVID-19 and had provided multiple modalities for remote learning when schools had closed. Those modalities ranged from paper-based materials to broadcast media, such as television and radio, to digital online platforms. Key lessons from those efforts could help guide more effective remote learning in the future. For example, it had become evident that the mere supply of remote learning was not sufficient to induce take-up and engagement. Effective remote learning should include high-tech strategies, such as ICT tools, as well as low-tech strategies, such as paper-based home kits.

A joint survey on remote learning carried out by UNESCO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank and the OECD had produced several findings. First, most low-income countries were using broadcast media while high-income countries preferred online platforms. Second, it was better to combine one-way technologies, such as television or radio, with interactive mobile-based modalities, including SMS or phone calls. The use of multiple modalities would help increase access for children who did not have access to digital devices or connectivity. Third, several factors could increase take-up and sustained use of remote learning. They included making sure that technology was suited to the context, having well-supported teachers and creating engaging content. Fourth, the use of a particular remote learning technology did not necessarily translate into actual learning. It was imperative to create a supportive and safe environment for learners, including by having well-trained and well-prepared teachers and taking care of the most marginalized and vulnerable learners. Fifth, a multidimensional approach was needed for digital remote learning, including sound policies and adequate funding. Sixth, only 27 per cent of low- and lower-middle-income countries had a fully operationalized policy on digital learning compared to half of high-income countries. Countries that had ICT in education policies prior to the pandemic had not always been able to operationalize them during the school closures.

Countries should follow several guiding principles when implementing ICT in education policies. First, they should work to ensure equity, inclusion and gender equality, which could be seen from two perspectives: (1) using education to close the equity divide in access to ICT and digital skills, and (2) ensuring inclusion, equity and gender equality in all ICT in education programmes. It was important to be aware that some AI tools and algorithms could be gender-biased or insufficiently inclusive. Second, countries should assess whether the educational benefits of implementing ICT in education programmes outweighed the costs. The deployment of ICT in the education system was expensive and could take away funds from more basic needs, such as ensuring every student had a desk or a safe classroom. Third, there was a need to assess negative impacts and risks. For example, countries should consider data privacy and cyber security, promote the digital well-being of learners and teachers and mitigate the impact of ICT on the environment. Fourth, a sector-wide approach should be put in place to include all subsectors within and outside education. Fifth, training and support for practitioners, including teachers, was essential. Sixth, it was important to set up proper strategies for monitoring and evaluation and generate evidence on their impact and effectiveness.

The Broadband Commission Working Group on Digital Learning had made several recommendations. She wished to highlight two in particular. The first recommendation was to establish stable and self-sustained financing solutions. Given that digital learning was not a one-time expenditure, it should be featured in institutions' budgets and, ideally, part of the government's broader educational plans. More predictable and sustained investments were necessary. The second recommendation was to proactively anticipate the impact of emerging technologies. She invited delegates to consult the newly released UNESCO publication entitled *AI in Education: guidance for policymakers* as well as the recent UNESCO Recommendation on the ethics of AI.

Technology could bring challenges and opportunities to the education sector. However, it was up to society to decide the direction in which it would go. Whatever the direction, digital innovation in education must always be underpinned by educational values.

**Ms. H. Järvinen** (Finland), co-Rapporteur, said that a tremendous lack of education had existed even before the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, as much as 80 per cent of 10-year-olds living in Sub-Saharan Africa could not read or write. The United Nations had also estimated that 150 million children were unable to access online or remote learning. Problems were evident even in Finland where the education system was of a high quality.

Digital learning offered many possibilities and could help deliver education to every corner of the world. Three things must be considered going forward. First, technology must be made available in sufficient quantities. Second, it was important to employ assistance personnel, such as psychologists, to support teachers and reduce school drop-out rates. Third, teachers must be educated on how to use computers and how to teach using digital tools. Digital learning should be as interactive as possible.

**Mr. S. Patra** (India), co-Rapporteur, said that it was important to be clear about the intention of the resolution. The resolution hinged on two key words: “leveraging” and “enabling”. There was no doubt that ICT could enable education. The more difficult question was how to leverage.

A number of questions must be considered when preparing the resolution. How could parliaments close the digital divide and ensure equal access to resources, whether academic, financial or technological? How could they promote digital learning in schools and higher education institutions making sure it reached all people? How could it be ensured that digital content was translated into local languages? How could the education and training system reflect industry needs and ensure skills development through ICT? How could ICT provide people with a competitive advantage and teach creativity and innovation skills? How could scholarships and funds be set up to facilitate talent development? How could public-private partnerships be brought in? How could ICT be incorporated into all stages of education, training and human resource development, including into adult education and life-long learning? How could a balance be found between digital learning and non-digital learning? The resolution should serve as a roadmap for countries, particularly in times of pandemic.

**Mr. B. Rajić** (Slovenia) said that COVID-19 had caused unimaginable problems for the education sector. After declaring a pandemic, the Government of Slovenia had shut down all educational institutions and taken all classes online. At first, users had encountered technical problems, such as overloaded servers, software errors and hacker attacks. Children with learning difficulties had received special attention to prevent inequalities in knowledge acquisition.

School was a place of socialization where children could develop social skills, tolerance and respect for diversity. Countries should consider extending online activities even after classes. It would improve the social component of remote learning by allowing children to interact in periods of quarantine, thus making them feel less alone.

**Ms. M. Al Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the educational system in the United Arab Emirates had been able to adapt during the pandemic thanks to the solid digital infrastructure in place. The Government had introduced remote learning and was training practitioners on the latest technology. Her country had scored highly in global rankings on education and pedagogy. It was taking action to create a knowledge-based society, bridge the digital divide, provide equal opportunities and ensure comprehensive sustainable development.

It was important to create strategic partnerships between the IPU and the United Nations with a view to promoting digital development, bridging the digital divide and ensuring equal educational opportunities. There was a need to adopt legislation on remote learning and digital emancipation in the education sector. Manuals or guidelines should be produced outlining the latest trends in the field. Parliamentarians should use their oversight function to follow up on digital emancipation in all national strategies and public policies. It was necessary to cooperate with the private sector and encourage the use of free applications and services.

**Ms. D. Kumari** (India) said that ICT had played a key role in improving the accessibility, efficiency, quality and effectiveness of the education sector during the pandemic. It was imperative that parliamentarians worked to improve the lives of citizens through accessible, affordable and quality education.

Over the past few decades, India had transformed into an information-intensive society with many initiatives in place to promote digital education. The Government had launched the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology to leverage the potential of ICT and make quality content accessible to all learners free of cost. Various schemes also existed through which learners had access to online resources. The PM eVidya initiative aimed to combine all efforts related to digital online education and enable multimodal access to education.

The latest technology, such as 5G, the Internet of Things and AI, carried huge potential for the education sector. Virtual and augmented reality had the capability to engage students in powerful ways, enhance educational experiences and promote understanding-based learning.

The pandemic had provided an opportunity to transform the education system. To do so, countries should reflect on existing learning process, the new role of technology and the complexities involved in facing an unknown future. She encouraged parliamentarians to engage actively with key stakeholders (students, parents, educators and leaders in the field of technology) and take action for a better future.

**Ms. S-M. Dinică** (Romania) said that the COVID-19 crisis had reiterated the importance of ICT as a means of leaving no one behind, including by enabling continuity in the education process. However, digitalization could deepen social and economic inequality if it was not accessible and inclusive for all. Leveraging ICT as an enabler of education meant bridging the digital divide within and among countries. For that, substantial investment was needed in ICT infrastructure and equipment, in digital skills training for students and teachers and in new educational content suited to online learning.

Having physical resources, such as broadband internet and computers, was not enough to bridge the digital divide. The way in which digital tools were used was equally important. Digitalization of education should go hand in hand with measures to protect users, especially children, against all types of abuse and violence perpetrated in the virtual space. Furthermore, it should not be confined to schools and universities alone but should also be part of life-long learning programmes. All citizens must have the chance to develop ICT skills and build immunity against disinformation.

Women continued to represent a large untapped reserve of talent in the field of technology. Parliaments should take steps to increase education for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects in order to harness the potential of ICT. Otherwise, social and economic opportunities would be lost, and gender inequality would increase.

**Mr. H. Al Mutar** (Kuwait) said that it was important to look at the root causes of the digital divide in education. Educational outputs should be assessed on all levels starting from early education.

Education had been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with schools suddenly being forced to move from the traditional realm into the digital realm. Even the most advanced countries, such as Finland, had experienced difficulties, leaving little hope for those with political and economic problems. In the case of Kuwait, adapting to remote learning had been reasonably quick, with both positive and negative outcomes.

It was an ethical duty for countries to assist one another in promoting quality education everywhere, particularly through technology. Parliamentarians must promote the proper legislation to make sure everyone could access the full benefits of ICT in education. Education must remain a key priority even after the pandemic because it was the gateway to political and economic stability.

**Ms. S. Sheehan** (United Kingdom) said that addressing the lack of equipment in education was vital. Remote learning was a non-starter unless the equipment was available to everyone. In the UK, equipment had been lacking even prior to the pandemic. The Government had recognized the problem during the lockdowns and made many more laptops available to schools. A great deal of equipment did exist but was often discarded. Processes should be put in place by governments and parliaments, particularly local governments, to make old computers available for reuse. The circular economy would be vital in addressing the problem.

**Mr. A. Ademi** (North Macedonia) said the use of ICT in the education system in North Macedonia had not been fully established at the beginning of the pandemic. However, schools had been able to quickly adapt to maintain continuity in teaching. The country had created a national system for distance learning, developed digital textbooks and interactive content, and trained teachers in new approaches appropriate for digital learning. Approximately 10,000 tablet computers had been given to students from socially vulnerable groups. The Ministry of Education and Science had also operationalized a website providing electronic services in the field of education. Services included: enrolment of children into school, recognition of qualifications and scholarship applications. Digitalization had initially been met with resistance by the public but had now been widely accepted as something of great importance and value.

Parliamentarians could contribute greatly to the development and effective implementation of digital education. The education system must be crisis-resistant and continue to function in times of pandemic. Countries that did not invest in the process risked being left behind.

**Ms. S. Attia** (Egypt) said that the educational system had been going through a paradigm shift. The pandemic had highlighted the relevance of SDG 4 on achieving equitable, quality education as well as SDG 17 on creating partnerships for sustainable development. Partnerships were needed to bridge the digital divide in education.

A model law should be enacted on ICT in education to minimize the impact of crises on the education sector. It was important to ensure knowledge transfer between countries to bridge the digital divide. Developed countries should provide least developed countries with financial support for technological infrastructure. New development models based on ICT and the knowledge economy should also be introduced. Respect of ethics in relation to ICT was also important. Parliaments should adopt national action plans to optimize the use of ICT in education with participation from the private sector and civil society. There was a need for educational programmes that centred around digital transformation and continuous training for students and teachers. Countries should share best practices about the use of ICT in education, particularly in times of pandemic. Greater financial support should be awarded to educational institutions in the national state budgets.

**Mr. R. Zare** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that Iran was a leader in the field of technology and had taken advantage of digital opportunities during the pandemic. Some of the digital measures taken to boost education included offering free internet to teachers and setting up a distance learning platform that allowed all classes to be held in an integrated, unified way. Although challenging at first, the work done towards digital learning had been very valuable and could be the start of a more participatory national education system. The role of ICT in education should be taken seriously. Countries should share experiences and put in place the necessary infrastructure.

**Mr. N. Alalou** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the war had had terrible implications on the education system in Syria. Terrorists had destroyed schools and universities and launched targeted attacks against faculty members. Much of the human resources had also fled the country. In response, the Government was promoting identity, dialogue and acceptance through education. Students whose universities had been attacked by terrorists had been able to pursue their studies at other universities.

COVID-19 had also had an impact on education in Syria with many universities and schools having to halt their classes. The Government had been introducing ICT tools and working to automate all educational material. It had, however, been difficult to acquire the proper equipment due to the precarious economic situation arising from the war and the blockade. Efforts had also been made to integrate the most vulnerable populations into educational solutions.

**Ms. A. Mulder** (Netherlands) agreed with the comments made by Ms. Dinică. It was true that technology was not neutral. Technology had created a huge data bias in the world which put women at a disadvantage to men. As a result, women were finding it difficult to find jobs, even with the best education.

**Ms. A. Lotriet** (South Africa) said that COVID-19 had been one of largest disrupters of education in modern history. In South Africa, all schools, universities and colleges had closed down, compromising nutrition and increasing school drop-out rates. However, one positive outcome arising from the pandemic was the opportunity to rethink digital education. South Africa had fostered collaboration in the form of public-private partnerships for teaching. Some private companies had agreed to zero-rate their learning sites as well as to substantially reduce their data bundle charges for better access to educational content. Lessons had also been broadcast on television and radio stations.

The pandemic had highlighted the stark inequalities in the education system. Digital education had only been able to reach 30 per cent of learners in South Africa due to lack of access to technology. Parliamentarians must urgently address the digital divide by revising and implementing national broadband targets, reducing costs of data and devices, and supporting students with connectivity. There was also a need to offer online classes in domestic languages, encourage public-private partnerships, set up zero-rated education sites and scale up the use of accessible technology, such as radio. Teachers must receive training and support to deliver remote and blended learning. Cyber security protections and data privacy measures should also be put in place. It was clear that digital technology and infrastructure were vital in building resilience and response capabilities for future pandemics.

**Ms. M. Alsenan** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia had had a national strategy on the digital transformation since 2006 and had invested US\$ 1.5 billion in digital infrastructure. During the pandemic, it had been able to move its education system entirely online but not without challenges. Some students lacked digital knowledge and others had no access to the internet. However, the Government had been able to quickly provide solutions. For instance, it had broadcast lessons on television, created applications containing educational content and made efforts to increase internet coverage in rural areas. Some non-governmental organizations had also been distributing free laptops. It was vital to restructure education so that it went hand in hand with the digital era and to increase the participation of parents in the education process.

**Mr. A.H. Tohir** (Indonesia) said that countries must harness the benefits of ICT to improve education while also considering the challenges. One major challenge was the digital divide. Sixty per cent of the global population had access to the internet but most were from developed countries. There were also big disparities in internet access between urban and rural areas as well as between high-income and low-income households. It would only be possible to leverage ICT if digital infrastructure was equally distributed. Another major challenge was digital security. The young generation was facing many online threats, including cyber bullying and online child sexual exploitation. However, the benefits of ICT surpassed the potential drawbacks as long as those issues were monitored closely and collaboratively. He appreciated some of the global initiatives being taken in the field, such as the Giga project, which aimed to increase connectivity among young people.

There was a need to increase the budget allocation for education, particularly for improving ICT in schools. It was obligatory for local governments in Indonesia to allocate a minimum of 20 per cent of their annual budget to the education sector. Parliamentarians should increase their oversight on such matters. Addressing the challenges of ICT in education required international cooperation and leadership.

**Mr. P. Gasunzu** (Burundi) said that the pandemic had wreaked havoc on the education sector, interrupting classes for millions of pupils and forcing a rapid transition to online learning. It was, however, a historic opportunity to reform the schooling system. Burundi had made notable progress regarding ICT but still had a long way to go to ensure fair and equal access. It hoped to increase connectivity, make devices more widespread and teach digital skills. Among the measures taken so far were making ICT equipment exempt from tax and introducing obligatory ICT lessons at school. Although Burundi had never closed its schools, digital skills were a key part of its education strategy. It was crucial that the strategy be translated into practical action. Parliamentarians needed to ensure inter-ministerial coordination and provision of basic tools, such as quality internet and electricity.

New technologies could have a positive impact on teaching and learning, particularly if they took into account teacher-student communication and were receptive to different learning contexts. ICT could be a good way to boost development. He urged investors to invest in the ICT sector which could in turn strengthen the education system.

**Ms. A.G. Pasha** (Pakistan) said that the pandemic had boosted the use of ICT in the education sector. In Pakistan, initiatives had been launched in public and private schools as well as at the national, subnational and even grassroots levels. They included online classes and television and radio schools. However, many challenges remained to be addressed. For example, the increased use of ICT could further increase educational inequalities, thus hampering social mobility and creating problems. The gender divide was also likely to increase.

She agreed that a whole ecosystem was needed to address the problem. The global community should consider how it would meet the funding requirements for the SDGs, including for SDG 4 on education. It was necessary to mobilize domestic resources as well as to bring in the private sector and multilateral development agencies. SDG 17 on partnerships was also important. Developed countries must support developing countries to mobilize resources, not only in terms of finance but also in terms of technology transfer. South-South and North-South cooperation should be top of the agenda, particularly following COVID-19, which had set back development in many developing countries.

**Ms. M. Guerra** (Mexico) said that the social isolation imposed during the pandemic had had a huge impact on education. Many Mexican schools had been forced to close their doors and begin home-schooling. The situation had accelerated the use of ICT tools. However, not everyone had access to those tools. According to UNESCO, only half the households in the world had access to the internet with a big gap between developed, developing and least developed countries. Without the equipment, children could not benefit from online education.

Building infrastructure and capacities was of vital importance as not all countries had the resources or platforms needed for remote learning. Although countries had been taking measures to improve remote learning, such as reinforcing online resources and introducing television and radio classes, many did not have national strategies on digital education. They must continue modernizing their education systems by putting into practice the lessons learnt over the course of the pandemic. Parliamentarians must pass the right legislation and allocate enough budget for ICT in education.

**Ms. H. Martins** (Portugal) said that the pandemic had exacerbated social inequities, with the most marginalized students most affected by disruptions to education. It was vital to ensure that no child was left behind. Portugal had established a learning programme to provide support to those in need. It had made computers available to all schools and broadcast classes on television. There was a need to develop digital knowledge and acquire equipment for remote learning. Children must always have direct interaction with teachers and other students.

**Mr. J.P. Mabaya** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the Democratic Republic of the Congo had tried to use ICT in schools during the pandemic but had not been hugely successful. It had only been possible to teach through television and radio programmes.

There was a big gap between developed and developing countries in terms of access to ICT. Countries who were lagging behind must receive the support they needed to catch up. If advanced countries such as Finland had struggled, then developing countries in Africa had little chance of coping. ICT in education should be made a priority. It was important to create partnerships to overcome the problem.

**Mr. M.A. Bouchouit** (Algeria) said that Algeria had been one of the first to mainstream ICT in education. It had a television channel specifically dedicated to giving classes as well as applications for distance learning. Education was also free at all levels in Algeria.

Education should be a priority for all so that justice could be served all over the world. Parliamentarians must put political crises aside to help countries such as Palestine that were struggling to provide education. Private sector engagement would be key in all areas of development, including education.

**Mr. M. Alabbasi** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain had been building infrastructure for ICT in education for more than a decade, resulting in a smooth transition to distance learning during the pandemic. ICT must become an intrinsic part of the education process. He called on delegates to make use of UNESCO expertise on the topic, particularly its recommendations on the SDGs.

**Ms. J. Aybar** (Cameroon) said that 19 per cent of 15-year-olds in Cameroon could not read or write and the situation had been further exacerbated by COVID-19. During the pandemic, Cameroon had introduced online programmes in urban areas and community-based programmes in rural areas. Parents had come together in small groups to help children with reading and writing. Schools had delivered classes on radio and television while universities had introduced distance learning programmes. The Ministry of Education was working to introduce a one student one laptop scheme in universities and to make ICT textbooks available in primary and secondary schools. Teacher training no longer focused on reading, writing and arithmetic but instead took a more personalized approach concentrating on the following: critical thinking and problem solving, communicative communication, collaboration and team building, and creativity and innovation. The approach aimed to better prepare children for the future. The role of ICT was threefold: as a tutor, a teaching tool and a learning tool. ICT could help children to catch up on their education as well as to improve their reading and writing skills.

**Mr. M. Qasem** (Palestine) said that Palestine valued education and had done its best to ensure that schooling continued in various forms throughout the pandemic. However, as a result of the occupation, Palestine lacked the capacities and opportunities needed to provide quality education. He called on the international community to put pressure on the occupying power so that the children of Palestine could live a life of peace and freedom.

**Mr. E. Ferzli** (Lebanon) said that Lebanon was currently going through difficult times. Factors contributing to the situation included precarious economic conditions, the COVID-19 pandemic, the 17 October revolution and external interference, particularly by Israel. The situation had highlighted a big gap between the political system and the people. The Government was working on introducing reform, including through its financial recovery plan. A culture of cooperation and political dialogue was also needed to overcome divisions and build a cohesive society. He called on the international community to provide support. Lebanon was one of the oldest democracies in history which used to supply the world with culture. Its collapse would represent a failure by the democratic world to protect the sources of democracy.



**Mr. M. Rossi** (San Marino) agreed that financial and technological resources were needed to support teachers, families and States in providing high-quality education. San Marino had experienced difficulties in providing distance learning during the pandemic. It had been more challenging to train teachers in the use of technologies than children who were much more computer-literate. Parliamentarians must ensure that enough technology and internet connections were available worldwide to continue education during the pandemic.

**Mr. J. Yoh** (South Sudan) said that South Sudan, like most other East African countries, lacked ICT infrastructure and devices. It had therefore been difficult to provide education during the lockdowns. Three important lessons had been learnt from the pandemic. First, all countries and people on the African continent must have access to ICT tools. Second, a global network of cooperation was needed to give children better access to education through ICT. Third, COVID-19 could be overcome through technology, science, advancement and innovation as long as the world came together as one.

**Ms. T.V. Muzenda** (Zimbabwe) said that the right to education had been enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe and further strengthened by the Education Act of 2020. Since the onset of the pandemic, the Government had been working on introducing alternative learning methods to ensure continuity of education. They included radio and television lessons, WhatsApp lessons, online lessons and an e-learning library. However, only the elite learners from public and private schools had access to alternative learning. The majority, particularly those from poorer families, were unable to get access due to the high costs of data. Digital learning required schools to have the appropriate equipment, including hardware, software, gadgets and high-speed internet connections. Most Sub-Saharan countries did not have such equipment. Internet coverage in Zimbabwe was as low as 33 per cent, putting students at a disadvantage in terms of digital learning.

**Ms. J. Sabao** (Zambia) said that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Zambia had developed flexible e-learning platforms with suitably designed learning content. It had also improved its internet services to enable learning to continue virtually. Internet providers had been offering zero-rated services to make the internet more affordable. Other measures included the creation of e-learning portals, the establishment of a learning management system and distribution of computers to schools. However, as a country, Zambia was facing many challenges, including inconsistent supply of electricity, a lack of internet or slow connectivity, and limited capacity to teach ICT. The education community was delivering ICT in schools as best it could, in line with regional and international aspirations. The Government was investing more in policy formulation and introducing programmes to improve education, including in times of pandemic. ICT was a cornerstone of teaching and learning but also an enabler of learning during crisis.

**Mr. A. Zhupanyin** (Ukraine) said that the Government of Ukraine had taken measures to support its education system which had not been ready for the lockdown. It had taken all learning online following the closure of schools and universities and introduced programmes to ensure continuity of learning. One programme aimed to ensure internet coverage across all urban areas while another sought to make thousands of laptops available to schoolteachers. The transition to online learning had not gone well at universities. University students had been ready to go online technically but not mentally, believing that it ate away at their free time. Some started working in parallel to their online studies while others saw online learning as a waste of time. The situation was yet to be resolved and was likely to cause problems on the labour markets.

**Mr. N.F. Shivambu** (South Africa) said that the world was embracing the fourth industrial revolution while many parts of Africa were still working on the second and third industrial revolutions. Many African countries had poor internet connectivity and were even struggling to provide basic electricity. It was not possible to leapfrog from a basic society to the fourth industrial revolution. That said, Africa was, in fact, one of the biggest consumers of devices such as mobile phones and computers. None of those devices, however, were manufactured there. There must be a purposeful focus on technology manufacturing in Africa. Not only would it make more technology available for education, but it would also boost economic development. Africa could not continue being a producer of raw and semi-processed natural resources while also being an importer of finished goods. The issue of technology must be dealt with holistically.

**Ms. I. Kharkova** (Associate Project Officer, UNESCO), expert, agreed that digital learning was impossible to achieve without access to devices or connectivity. However, devices and connectivity alone were not enough. It was also important to carry out teacher training, apply the appropriate pedagogies and design online content adapted to learners' needs. A mix of different modalities could be used. Indeed, ICT referred not only to online learning platforms powered by AI algorithms or data analytics but also to television, radio, WhatsApp and SMS which could be very effective learning tools both in normal times and in crisis. Gender biases did exist in AI algorithms which could in turn affect education. Those biases must be addressed for effective human development. She agreed that digital literacy was critical but so was AI literacy. Indeed, AI tools were penetrating education systems not only in developed countries but also in developing ones. There was a need to leverage partnerships between the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the government, as well as to ensure regulation. Governments needed to ensure that devices deployed in schools were in line with educational values and with the national curriculum. They should also consider how to protect the privacy and data of learners and teachers even if the online platforms were not yet developed. Technology could not replace teachers and schools but could be an effective way to build resilience in the education sector.

**Ms. H. Järvinen** (Finland), co-Rapporteur, said that the discussion had provided a very good basis for the draft resolution. All countries must progress in the area of digital learning, or they would be left behind.

*The sitting rose at 11:50.*

#### **SITTING OF MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER**

(Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 11:00 with Mr. W. William (Seychelles), Member of the Standing Committee Bureau, in the Chair.*

#### **Elections**

**The Chair** said that there were three vacancies on the Bureau: two for the Arab Group and one for the Eurasia Group. The Arab Group had nominated Mr. N. Al Alou (Syrian Arab Republic) and Mr. H. Al Matar (Kuwait) while the Eurasia Group had nominated Ms. T. Vardanyan (Armenia) to fill the vacancies. In addition, the Asia-Pacific Group wished to replace its current member from Thailand with Mr. K. Tontisirin (Thailand) to complete a second term expiring in April 2023.

*The nominations were approved.*

**The Chair** said that the presidency of the Standing Committee changed every two years and operated on the basis of regional rotation. Efforts were always made to ensure gender parity among the leadership positions. The geopolitical groups had decided to accord the next presidency to the Twelve Plus Group and the next vice-presidency to the African Group. The Twelve Plus Group had been invited to nominate a female member of the Bureau while the African Group had been invited to nominate a male member of the Bureau. The two final candidates were Ms. A. Mulder (Netherlands) for President and Mr. W. William (Seychelles) for Vice-President.

*The nominations were approved.*

#### **Workplan**

**The Chair** said that the Bureau wished to propose that the Committee dedicate all its time at the next Assembly to the preparation and debate of the next resolution.

*It was so decided.*

**Panel discussion on the *Impact of climate change on natural resources: How can parliaments ensure inclusive water access and availability?***

**Mr. D. Muruven** (Global Policy Lead on Freshwater, World Wide Fund for Nature), panellist, said that the impacts of climate change would be primarily experienced through water, whether it be too much water, resulting in flooding, or too little water, resulting in drought. So far, the climate debate had centred largely on mitigation but must now move more towards adaptation. Those on the front lines had already been forced to adapt. Building resilience through adaptation was, nevertheless, a collective responsibility.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, world leaders had urged people to wash their hands as the first line of defence against the virus. However, the act of washing one's hands became complicated in a world where over a billion people did not have access to water and 2.7 billion people found water scarce for at least one month a year.

There was no simple solution to the problem, with numerous challenges affecting water access. He wished to highlight one challenge in particular. Often, countries did not give much thought to where their water came from. It was, however, vital to protect the rivers, lakes and wetlands that delivered water. Giving due consideration to the natural water resources themselves was just as important as building infrastructure to provide access.

The future policy landscape for dealing with water scarcity must take three factors into account. First, policies should be integrated to address multiple interconnected problems rather than dealing with them in silos. In particular, policies around infrastructure, environment, health and planning needed better integration. Second, there was an urgent need for innovation, especially social innovation. All stakeholders must come together to design new solutions. There was a strong history of innovation in the public sector and parliamentarians had a key role to play in stimulating that discussion. Third, it was crucial to bring in indigenous knowledge as part of the policy making process. Indigenous communities had been cultivating connections with the natural environment for generations and understood the concepts of sustainability and resilience better than most.

He drew attention to the concept of *ubuntu*, a term arising from South African philosophy meaning "I am because of who we all are". The world would be a better place if countries designed their policies with *ubuntu* in mind.

**Mr. L. Li** (Director of Land and Water Division, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)), , accompanying his remarks with a digital slide presentation, said that the scale of the challenge to conserve natural resources and meet the world's growing food and water needs was massive. The land and water systems that supplied more than 95 per cent of global food were under great pressure. Current patterns of intensification in the agricultural sector were not proving sustainable due to high levels of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Problems were arising in food production as well as in climate innovation. It was also clear that productivity was being stretched to its limit and food security was becoming increasingly threatened by water scarcity. The international community must find new ways to manage land and water resources in the future.

The world was facing a number of water-related challenges. First, climate change was changing the global water balance. Second, water scarcity had become a major threat, with more than 1.2 billion people experiencing severe water shortages. Third, more than 730 million people were living in countries with very high water stress. Fourth, groundwater depletion was greatly impacting food security. Fifth, drylands were a resource accounting for 44 per cent of globally cultivated lands and needed better management.

Opportunities for innovation did exist. For example, the FAO had been using remote sensing data to decipher where water was needed, how much water was available and how to manage irrigation. It had also developed an application used by farmers to guide their irrigation plans and help manage their water.

The FAO would soon launch a report entitled, *The state of the world's land and water resources for food and agriculture: Systems at breaking point (SOLAW 2021)*. The report laid out four action areas for the future. First, land and water governance must be much more inclusive. There was a need to develop a coordinated and coherent policy as well as to introduce legal and institutional arrangements across all sectors. Devolving governance and addressing power differentials could also help in addition to adopting more adaptive governance and structural changes. Second, countries must implement integrated solutions at scale. Solutions could include planning land and water resources at different decision-making levels and packaging workable solutions, such as environmental stewardship and social responsibility practices. It would thus be possible to avoid and reverse land degradation as well as to apply approaches for sustainable land management, sustainable soil management and integrated water resource management. Third, it was important to embrace innovative technologies to tackle problem soils, address water scarcity and move beyond the farm gate. Fourth, countries should invest in long-term sustainability.

The FAO had been working with parliamentarians of the European Union (EU) to secure funding for FAO projects and to build much-needed partnerships. Collaboration had been successful, particularly on soil. Indeed, a number of FAO recommendations on soil had been reflected in the EU soil strategy for 2030, recognizing that soil could play a much stronger role in providing food and ensuring carbon sequestration. The FAO hoped to collaborate more closely with the EU on topics such as promoting resilient and green agriculture, addressing climate impacts through sustainable natural resource management, and boosting private sector stewardship.

**Ms. M. Alsenan** (Saudi Arabia) said that countries must agree that a problem existed so that common action could be taken. Saudi Arabia was a desert area that lacked flowing water and was therefore working to improve water availability. It had carried out local water projects and was contributing to research. It had also launched its National Water Strategy 2030 which aimed to ensure sustainable use of water resources, decrease water demand and preserve non-renewable water sources. Under the strategy, her Government hoped to set up a water management system, build capabilities and establish a public institution tasked with purifying saltwater. Saudi Arabia had recently hosted a summit for leaders in the region to enhance cooperation and political will on environmental matters. It had also organized meetings on water issues during the G20 meeting held in Riyadh in 2020.

**Mr. J.P. Mabaya** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that Democratic Republic of the Congo held more than 50 per cent of water reserves in Africa. Indeed, the Congo River, together with its tributaries, was the second biggest river in the world. However, the impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, lower precipitation levels and desertification, were putting Congo's water resources under threat. For example, the Kalahari desert was beginning to encroach on the Congo River and was already threatening water resources in the Central African Republic. The southeast of the country was also seeing an exponential reduction in the length of the rainy season with more and more periods of drought.

**Mr. V. Dayal Ram** (India) said that the impact of climate change on water was evident. Changing precipitation patterns as well as melting snow and ice were altering hydrological systems and reducing the quantity and quality of water resources around the world. India was also feeling the effects. Indeed, climate change was expected to impact the country's diverse ecosystems, including its coastline, mountains, forests and glaciers.

Water was not only a basic human need but also a resource critical for sustainable development. Parliamentarians must proactively monitor and prescribe policy measures for the efficient management of water. In India, monitoring of water took place in the parliamentary committees. On several occasions, the parliamentary committee on water resources had persuaded the executive to provide farmers with incentives to apply water-saving technology. The Prime Minister had also announced a programme entitled the Jal Jeevan Mission aiming to supply safe piped drinking water to every rural household by 2024.

**Mr. N. Al Alou** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Syrian agriculture had been negatively affected by climate change with desertification posing a particular problem. In addition, the embargo against Syria was impeding the country's ability to mitigate the effects of climate change, transition to clean energy and access much-needed resources, such as water. Unfortunately, terrorist groups operating in the northeast of the country were using machinery that emitted high levels of pollution. Parliamentarians should support the Syrian people in their efforts to sustain their agricultural sector and to obtain their fair share of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Funding and capacity building efforts were needed to address climate change and ensure sustainable development. He called on the international community to condemn the events in Al-Hasakah where insurgents were cutting off the water supply to Syrians.

**Ms. S. Attia** (Egypt) said that Egypt was predominantly a desert area and faced many climate challenges despite having lower emissions than other countries. In October 2021, the Parliament had launched a new water irrigation project and recently announced a new climate strategy. Other measures included looking at climate adaptation for the agricultural sector, particularly in terms of water management, and increasing cooperation with neighbouring countries to address water scarcity.

Parliamentarians must consider whether their climate change legislation adequately addressed the water crisis. Legislation should ensure optimal use and quality of water resources. It was important that all stakeholders worldwide worked not only on limiting environmental degradation but also on preserving the environment, including the natural water cycle. States should invest in the green economy and promote scientific research and innovation in order to better manage water resources. It would then be possible to improve water and food security as well as to reduce poverty.

**Mr. Bui Son Hoai** (Viet Nam) said that water scarcity negatively affected health, labour productivity and livelihoods, particularly among low-income and vulnerable communities. Changes in water availability also impacted food security, which was in part a contributor to political conflicts, instability and displacement. Overall, access to safe and sufficient water helped to maintain a stable and prosperous world.

The Parliament of Viet Nam wished to make several recommendations. First, it was necessary to promote research and education. Indeed, advancements in science and technology would be key to enhancing global water security and protecting water resources. Innovative solutions were needed to recycle rain and wastewater, purify water and enhance water storage. Second, countries should promote reforestation and forest protection policies, restore mangroves to protect the coast from erosion and sea-level rise, and reduce the salinity of soil, surface water and groundwater. Third, there was a need to raise awareness around the efficient use of natural resources, especially water, and to encourage people to adopt green, sustainable lifestyles. Fourth, it was important to strengthen international cooperation on the management, protection and development of water resources, particularly to ensure clean water availability and sustainable use of transboundary water resources.

**Ms. A. Lotriet** (South Africa) said that South Africa had enshrined the right to water in its Constitution but continued to have major water problems. Over 3 million people did not have access to basic water supply services while 14.1 million people did not have access to safe sanitation. More than 50 per cent of the country's wetlands had been lost and those that remained were in poor ecological condition. There were also problems related to insufficient water infrastructure, maintenance and investment as well as a lack of skilled water engineers. If not addressed, the situation would place additional burdens on poverty alleviation efforts and significantly hamper socioeconomic prosperity.

In 2017, the city of Cape Town had experienced a “day zero” where inhabitants had been left without water. Individuals and businesses had been forced to adopt extreme measures, including recycling laundry water and taking fewer showers. According to experts, desalinization was the best way to secure water supply but also the most expensive. Without massive international investment and assistance, most countries would not be able to pursue desalination. Parliaments must put pressure on their governments to provide climate financing to developing countries. They should take measures to enhance climate services, such as agricultural advice, and establish community early warning systems. It was important to educate the public about the importance of water conservation and ensure continuous maintenance of national infrastructure.

**Mr. B.N. Bassiere** (Burkina Faso) said that Burkina Faso was expecting to have less rainfall, fewer water resources, a greater rate of water evaporation and a smaller volume of water in the coming years. With that in mind, the country had set up a parliamentary network on water, hygiene and sanitation at the national level as well as one for West African parliamentarians. Parliamentarians must make sure that national policies on water and sanitation catered for emergencies and conflict situations and incorporated good governance models that integrated climate change issues with water management. There was also a need to legislate on dangerous substances discharged into water. It would be helpful to establish installations tasked with circulating clean water to all in sufficient quantities as well as to have appropriate water pricing policies, such as a sliding scale or flexible payment methods. He asked the panellists to clarify the role of parliamentarians in implementing the Paris Agreement.

**Ms. S.-M. Dinică** (Romania) said that access to drinking water and sanitation were fundamental human rights. Romania had been focusing on developing water and sanitation infrastructure and services in line with the European Union requirements. It was also working to achieve the new ambitious climate targets of the European Union. Among the country's priorities were addressing the vulnerability of the agricultural sector, improving water management and strengthening the role of disaster risk reduction. The national recovery and resilience plan included reforms to improve the management of water resources and increase weather alerts and warnings by enhancing meteorological information.

Romania was also fully engaged in global water efforts. In 2020, 10 per cent of the national budget for humanitarian assistance and international development cooperation had been allocated to small island developing States in areas related to water security, biodiversity, preservation and disaster preparedness.

Bold action from governments, parliaments, water specialists, the private sector and civil society was needed to meet the growing demand for water resources. It was important to work together in three interrelated areas: (1) increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation to improve human health; (2) improving water resource management; and (3) increasing the productivity of water resources. Parliamentarians should follow closely the World Water Forum in Dakar in 2022 and consider adopting a resolution on water governance in the future.

**Mr. H. Al Mutar** (Kuwait) said that climate change had many impacts, including water and food scarcity, which in turn affected global stability and peace. It was extremely important to reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions and to limit global warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius. The continued loss of biodiversity and ecosystem degradation was a concern for the whole world. Not only did it destroy livelihoods and increase hunger and poverty rates, but it also triggered conflicts and migration. It was vital to develop adaptation policies, exchange accurate information on environmental issues and invest in scientific research in order to achieve water and food security. Kuwait had taken many measures to address the problem. For example, it was participating positively and effectively at the international level and had introduced reform plans to reduce the negative effects of climate change. Parliamentarians must adopt legislation to protect the environment.

**Mr. R. Zare** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the international community must develop ways to preserve the environment. Regional partnerships were necessary to prevent climate change from negatively affecting people's lives. Iran had signed a number of international accords and treaties on environmental protection. It was important to preserve water resources as lack of water was often a cause of conflict.

**Ms. S. Sheehan** (United Kingdom) said that water was a human right. Yet, 800 million people worldwide lived without easy access to clean water, with women and girls particularly affected. Parliaments had a duty to embed climate resilience across all their programmes. It was important to strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene systems while addressing inequality, particularly for women and girls.

In the case of too little water, countries experienced prolonged droughts and increased groundwater salinity. Measures to address the problem included implementing better storage facilities, putting in place transportation infrastructure to take water from lower salinity areas to high salinity areas, and empowering individual households to collect and purify their own rainwater. In the case of too much water, countries experienced floods and cyclones. The UK was greatly affected by the problem of too much water, causing sewage systems to overflow and contaminate water bodies.

All national adaptation plans must include water sanitation and hygiene considerations. It was important to conduct a mapping exercise on water related threats, carry out risk-based planning and build links between local communities, including schools. The views of local government and regional support institutions must be taken into account.

**Mr. A. Al Aifan** (Arab Parliament) said that economic growth could not come at the expense of natural resources, such as water. International coordination was needed to ensure sustainable growth, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, while also addressing the difficulties brought about by climate change in line with the recommendations of the G20 summit in Rome and the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Glasgow. Parliaments must take joint action to ensure that all climate change agreements, laws and strategies were respected. Joint parliamentary action would be a strong source of support for the UNFCCC. It was also important to share best parliamentary practices and to conduct regular reassessments.

**Ms. M. Al Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had played a prominent role in efforts to address climate change both regionally and internationally. It was the first Arab country to have committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. It had ratified the declarations of COP26 and would also be hosting the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the UNFCCC in 2023. Overall, climate change was an important pillar in the country's environmental strategies, economic plans and domestic and foreign policies. Parliaments had a key role to play in addressing the climate crisis. She called on the IPU to launch a campaign encouraging parliamentarians to adopt greener practices.

**Mr. M. Rakotomalala** (Madagascar) said that Madagascar had experienced many climate-related difficulties, particularly in terms of access to water. The south of the country was severely affected by drought which had in turn led to famine. The solution was to reforest. Reforestation, however, was not a short-term measure. He called for a comprehensive approach to environmental protection aiming to protect the planet as a whole.

**Ms. M. Guerra** (Mexico) said that access to water, sanitation and hygiene was a basic human right, yet billions of people lived without it. According to the United Nations, 3 out of 10 people did not have access to drinking water while 6 out of 10 people did not have access to secure sanitary installations. Around 80 per cent of residual water was dumped untreated into rivers and seas, and billions of people worldwide used water contaminated with sewage.

The water crisis was particularly evident in the Americas despite it being the region with the most freshwater in the world. Mexico was also feeling the effects. It had recently declared the extinction of its glacier, Ayoloco, which would have serious impacts on the availability of water.

Parliamentarians were in a great position to analyse how governments were responding to climate change as well as to oversee their actions. It was only through concrete action, particularly legislation, that countries could ensure better water coverage. Water should be high quality, uncontaminated and fairly priced. Sufficient budget allocations were also needed. Water was a matter of national security.

**Mr. M. Qasem** (Palestine) said that the occupying State was behaving like a bully and stealing the many natural resources that belonged to Palestine. It was also practising racism against Palestinians, for instance, by taking away drinking water from women and children, denying farmers water for their farmlands and preventing fisherman from fishing. In Gaza, more than a million people did not have access to drinking water. Indeed, much of it was polluted because of the war. It was true that climate change had caused many negative impacts. However, the problem in Palestine was also about a lack of freedom, independence and peace, preventing Palestinians from enjoying the fruits of their land. He called on the IPU to put pressure on the occupying State to act in accordance with international resolutions. It was also important to administer sanctions for the racist practices committed against Palestinians.

**Ms. V. Riotton** (France) said that every citizen in France had equal access to water. However, the volume of water available was not the same everywhere, with some areas experiencing a deficit. France was focusing on three areas in its work on water access. First, it hoped to reduce water leakage problems by 20 per cent by restoring its extensive but rather old water network. Second, it was working to introduce new technology for water regulation. Third, it was launching an effort to recycle more water. Currently, France recycled only 0.2 per cent of its water compared to 8 per cent in Italy and 14 per cent in Spain. In addition to water access, it was important to ensure water quality by filtering out micropollutants and microbacteria.

The Parliament of France had decided to allocate 30 billion euros of its COVID-19 recovery plan to the ecological transition. Funds would be spent on agriculture, reforestation and production of organic, sustainable and local food. Change was an individual responsibility but also a collective one.

**Mr. M. Zulu** (Zambia) said that climate change was exerting stress on Zambia, leading to floods and droughts and negatively impacting the water supply. To address the problem, the Government of Zambia had established the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation, the Water Resources Management Authority and the National Water Supply and Sanitation Council. It also hoped to develop a national water supply and sanitation policy for 2022 and had already put in place a climate change policy. The latter aimed to build resilient and low-carbon systems, for instance by introducing adaptation measures in the water sector. In addition, the Parliament had set up a parliamentary committee on energy and water development and was working on a number of environmental laws, including the Forest Act, which sought to ensure the sustainable management and control of protected forests. Forests were important given that they acted as carbon sinks, yet many of Zambia's forests had been cut down. He called on the international community to plant more trees with a view to reducing climate change.

**Ms. T.V. Muzenda** (Zimbabwe) said that climate change had had an adverse impact on natural resources and water availability in Zimbabwe. The country had recently been hit by Cyclone Idai. The cyclone had caused unpredictable rainfall patterns, thus negatively affecting agricultural productivity. The Government had recently launched its National Development Strategy 1 which set out plans to harvest as much water as possible during the rainy season. It also hoped to improve some major dams, restore irrigation infrastructure and drill 35,000 boreholes in rural areas. The Parliament must use its oversight role to make sure the above projects were implemented. Resources, however, were severely constrained as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. She called on the private sector and the international community to make water available for the people, for agricultural productivity and for food security. The IPU must continue raising its collective voice in support of green energy solutions and sustainable agricultural practices worldwide.

**Ms. A. Kalmari** (Finland) said that Finland was suffering from too much water. It had tried to drain its fields but had still managed to lose half its crops the previous year. The country was doing its part to address climate change, for instance, by minimizing its emissions and taking care of its forests. Many of its resources had gone into developing techniques to manage surface water, including through vegetative filter strips. Finland was happy to share its techniques with other countries. The international community must work together to find solutions.

**Mr. J.V. Ndouma Mbadinga** (Gabon) said that Gabon was very sensitive to the impacts of climate change and was working, in particular, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Around 87 per cent of the territory of Gabon was forest. His country was therefore prioritizing carbon stocks in its strategy to combat climate change.

Access to drinking water was a right recognized by the United Nations, yet billions of people worldwide were deprived of it. It was important to work in homes, at the national level and with international organizations to make water access a long-lasting priority. Parliamentarians must make sure that the right to water was covered in national constitutions and laws. They must value water as a resource, guarantee equal distribution of water and introduce water governance at different levels. Local authorities and communities should be the ones responsible for the day-to-day management of drinking water and sanitation services. They must be given the funding and knowledge to carry out those functions.

**Mr. M. Abdallah** (Niger) said that Niger's territory was three quarters desert, making agricultural development difficult. The desert, however, contained billions of square metres of fresh water which could be used for reforestation and agriculture. Funding was needed in order to make that water available. Parliamentarians worldwide must encourage wealthy countries to free up green funds for developing countries. All countries were responsible for protecting Planet Earth.

**Ms. H. Martins** (Portugal) said that countries must create the conditions needed for universal access to water and sanitation, giving priority to the most disadvantaged. Climate change had many impacts on water access. It often led to drought and, in turn, displacement. It was essential to put in place water retention systems that had positive effects on ecosystems. More problems arose when rivers were common to several countries, such as in the case of the Tigris River. Policies must be developed to urgently address the above issues.

**Mr. A. Dichter** (Israel) said that Israel had no problem supplying water to Palestine. It was already supplying Jordan with 50 million cubic metres a year and could do the same for Palestine. The problem in Palestine lay not in the supply but in the pipework. Indeed, the pipes were unable to carry the amount of water that Israel could supply. The Palestinian authority, instead of allocating funds to renovate the pipes, was spending 7 per cent of its budget on salaries for terrorists. There was a similar situation with electricity. Israel received electricity from Jordan in return for water and had enough to pass on to its neighbours. The cables in Palestine, however, were not wide enough to receive it.

**Mr. D. Muruven** (Global Policy Lead on Freshwater, World Wide Fund for Nature), said that it was vital to shift the narrative from mitigation to adaptation as well as to ensure access to climate finance. Working collectively to meet climate finance commitments would be key to ensuring that the people most in need had the resources necessary to adapt.

*The sitting rose at 12:40.*



## Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

### SITTING OF MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER

(Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 14:35, with Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia), member of the Bureau of the Standing Committee, in the Chair.*

#### **Adoption of the agenda** (C-IV/143/A.1)

*The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Approval of the summary record of the Committee's virtual session held during the 142nd IPU Assembly (April/May 2021)**

*The summary record was approved.*

#### **The global vaccination campaign to end the COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons from the World Health Organization and the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS**

**The Chair**, introducing the item and noting that its subject matter chimed well with the 143rd Assembly's emergency item *Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic*, said that unequal access to the COVID-19 vaccine worldwide provided a clear illustration of a multilateral system in need of reform. There had been many calls for the vaccine to be declared a global public good and for initiatives to ensure, at low cost, the large quantities required to meet the demand for billions of doses. He welcomed the three panellists who would be speaking via video link to contribute their expertise to the discussion

**Ms. S. Swaminathan** (Chief Scientist, World Health Organization (WHO)), panellist, accompanying her remarks with a digital slide presentation, said with respect to the global COVID-19 immunization roll-out that programmes were under way in all but two of the world's countries, economies and territories, with a record distribution of almost 8 billion doses achieved within one year. Of the six WHO regions, the Western Pacific had the largest share of fully vaccinated people, standing at 75 per cent, followed by the Americas, the European, South-East Asian and Eastern Mediterranean Regions and, lastly, the African Region, where only 5 per cent of the population was fully vaccinated. The percentages would have been higher if children had been excluded from the population figures for each region. Furthermore, had the global vaccine supply been equitably distributed, the coverage targets of 10 per cent by the end of September 2021 and 40 per cent by the end of 2021 would have been reached.

The amazing scientific and technological fact was that dozens of vaccines had been either developed or were in development. At least 17 vaccines had been deployed to date, 8 of which had received WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL) and were in line with policy recommendations, meaning that they had met the benchmarks for efficacy, safety and quality manufacturing practices after going through the requisite procedure, which the others – potentially equally as good – might not yet have done. Additional vaccines under evaluation included Novavax and Clover, both of which had proved effective in clinical trials and were likely to be the next vaccines to be rolled out. Also being assessed was the Sputnik vaccine. The detailed recommendations on vaccines were updated as necessary by the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization, generally known as SAGE, which met every two weeks.

Omicron, the latest variant of concern, first reported in South Africa, was occurring in an increasing number of countries, but it was not yet known whether it was more transmissible than other variants, including Delta, or whether it caused more severe disease than, or different symptoms to, previous variants. The reported infections had been predominantly among younger people, who tended to have milder disease and some of whom had also previously had COVID-19 or were vaccinated. The concern was, however, that Omicron had many more mutations than previous variants. All relevant WHO advisory groups were meeting daily to review the evidence as it arrived and the WHO had requested countries to enhance surveillance; share any genomic sequences on publicly available databases, such as the Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data, or GISAID; report initial cases to the WHO through the mechanisms of the International Health Regulations; undertake field investigation and laboratory assessments for a better understanding of Omicron; and continue to apply effective public health measures, such as physical distancing, mask-wearing, good ventilation and respiratory hygiene, to reduce COVID-19 circulation overall. Vaccination coverage would, of course, be critical in fighting any variant.

The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) had been established in April 2020 to deliver vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. On the basis of its achievements, the calculation was that the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility would need to deliver some 5 billion vaccine doses to meet the vaccination coverage target of at least 70 per cent of country populations in mid-2022. Support in the form of 2 billion tests would also be required to ensure that all countries met the recently set diagnostic target, which was that, each day, at least 100 in every 100,000 people should be tested for COVID-19. In encouraging news, oral antiviral treatments developed by Merck and Pfizer had given positive results if administered within three to five days of infection. Both companies had signed licensing agreements with the Medicines Patent Pool to allow generic manufacturers to scale up access to those treatments in some 100 low- and middle-income countries. ACT-A was also seeking US\$ 23 billion – US\$ 17 billion of it immediately – to finance the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers.

Crucial to achieving vaccine equity, COVAX had to date contributed 80 per cent of vaccines administered in low-income countries, at least 40 of which would otherwise have had no vaccines. Vaccine manufacturers were located primarily in a handful of countries. The entire African continent and much of Latin America had insufficient capacity – only 1 per cent in the case of Africa – for manufacturing not only vaccines but also drugs, diagnostic devices and other products, creating a bottleneck that would similarly occur in any future pandemic. To address that and other issues relating to, for instance, supply chains and trade restrictions, the ACT-A Facilitation Council Vaccine Manufacturing Group had been formed. With bilateral technology transfer involving such companies as AstraZeneca already in progress, the Group was working on a multilateral technology transfer hub model in which a hub would serve as a training site for manufacturers from different countries. A number of countries had expressed interest in either hosting such a hub or donating technology, while others had requested to receive technology. The first mRNA technology hub in Cape Town was poised to become a training site as from early 2022. As the result of a further call for expressions of interest, Argentina and Brazil had recently been selected as additional mRNA spokes in Latin America, with countries in other regions set to follow suit, the aim being to achieve regional health security.

Another aim was to set up a biomanufacturing training hub to increase the supply of skilled workers through both generic and specific training, with the WHO Academy involved in developing and delivering the curriculum for on-site and online learning. Numerous countries had joined the Solidarity Call to Action via which the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) had been launched to promote open science through pooling of intellectual property, data and know-how, scale up manufacturing, and ensure linkages among all key partners, including funders, research institutions and governments. The first C-TAP licensing and technology transfer agreement had been signed during the previous week with the Spanish Research Institute, which offered a worldwide, transparent and non-exclusive voluntary licence for serological antibody testing. The hope was that much more technology would eventually be deposited into C-TAP. The WHO worked closely with the Medicines Patent Pool in view of its expertise in the licensing and management of intellectual property.

With regard to achieving the global COVID-19 vaccination targets, the first challenge would be to produce an adequate global supply of COVID-19 vaccines, although manufacturers were fortunately scaling up and new vaccines were becoming available. The other key challenges were those of ensuring sufficient financial and programmatic resources for procurement and delivery through COVAX partners, including WHO, Gavi, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations; guaranteeing equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines; and managing risks associated with the emergence of new variants of SARS-CoV-2.

The numerous challenges facing countries in connection with COVID-19 vaccination revolved around such matters as the erratic and unpredictable supply of vaccines; political commitment; limited number of health-care workers; limited availability of doses; shorter shelf life; complex vaccine handling; stringent storage requirements; multiple products to manage; evolving science; and lack of funding. While predictable supply had posed a significant problem throughout most of 2021, the pace of shipments was increasing rapidly and more than 120 million doses had been delivered in the preceding month.

Concerning actions needed to achieve the target of 70 per cent vaccination coverage by mid-2022, manufacturers and donors must provide transparent data about vaccine supply and delivery, and countries about any bilateral agreements with manufacturers. Countries were requested to establish national plans, taking into account equity and high-risk groups, and countries that had already vaccinated over 40 per cent of their population were requested to redirect doses to COVAX. Civil society and the private sector had an important role to play, particularly in community engagement, empowering people and working as partners locally. COVAX partners should support end-to-end impact entailing, among other things, research and development, procurement, delivery, allocation and communication around vaccine hesitancy. Multilateral development banks should continue their provision of substantial resources to fund national vaccination services, while manufacturers should prioritize transparency and the supply of vaccines to COVAX. The WHO would be making a recommendation as to whether the COVID-19 vaccine composition should change.

As could be seen, the acceleration of equitable vaccination campaigns involved not only vaccines but also diagnostics, medicines, medical devices and PPE, as well as the in-country and other measures mentioned. It had also prompted the calls for a waiver of certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) and for compulsory licensing. Equally applicable to the handling of the pandemic, overall factors for success included having political leadership at the highest level as well as oversight and a senior person in charge of vaccination; approaching the matter as if it were an emergency operation; bringing vaccination close to communities; and communicating constantly with communities to provide updates and counter anti-vaccination messages. To prevent prolonged legal battles, COVAX had set up a compensation fund for the benefit of anyone in Advance Market Commitment (AMC) countries who suffered a serious side effect from a vaccine supplied through its channels. Many countries also had polio assets that could be used strategically.

**Mr. E. Gomez** (Chief of Staff, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)), panellist, accompanying his remarks with a digital slide presentation, said that the HIV pandemic, which continued to rage 40 years after the first reported cases, provided important lessons for effective pandemic work. From the UNAIDS perspective, colliding pandemics must be managed; the HIV infrastructure must be leveraged to beat COVID-19, especially as for many countries it was the only available option; and health, together with thinking on health, must be reinvented. The new 2021 World AIDS Day report *Unequal, unprepared, under threat* highlighted five critical elements for strengthening global pandemic prevention, preparedness and response architecture, specifically: community-led and community-based infrastructure; equitable access to medicines, vaccines and health technologies; support for workers on the pandemic front lines; human rights-centred pandemic responses; and people-centred data systems that highlighted inequalities. Those elements of successful response, participation and inclusion had sometimes been missing in the COVID-19 response but were essential to countering misinformation and vaccine hesitancy, areas in which parliamentarians had a key role to play, as was also the case in ensuring a human rights-based approach in legislation and oversight.

UNAIDS had fully engaged in the issue of equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines; not only did the situation echo the early days of HIV but people living with HIV were at risk from COVID-19. UNAIDS had furthermore learned a historic lesson from the HIV fight, which was that avoidable deaths must be prevented. It was therefore sharing knowledge about improving access to technology, including through the People's Vaccine Alliance, which it had founded as part of its advocacy role in May 2020. Supported by over 170 global leaders, including heads of State and government, the alliance called for an effective vaccination plan, a review of intellectual property rights, greater public investment in vaccine manufacturing, cost-free access to COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests, and public health system strengthening. UNAIDS had discovered through its work that the drivers of the starkly unequal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines were also affecting the availability, affordability and accessibility of new HIV treatment formulations, oral pre-exposure prophylaxis, long-acting injectable antiretrovirals and other innovative HIV treatments, as well as HIV vaccines and cures. A more forward-leaning approach to sharing would help to defeat COVID-19 and also build systems that would be beneficial in future pandemics. Parliamentarians should avail themselves of the full parliamentary toolbox to contribute to beating COVID-19 on the back of lessons learned from the fight against HIV, which had succeeded in some aspects, and to improving pandemic preparedness.

UNAIDS was very supportive of all efforts to ensure access for all to health technologies but pressure was needed to ensure their success. Parliamentarians had an obvious legislative role to play in the relentless endeavour to break down legal barriers that made no sense from the public health standpoint. In addition, however, they must more forcefully exert their financial powers to create financial incentives, first to promote transparency, which was good and healthy for a functioning market with respect to COVID-19 solutions but was still very much lacking, with countries sometimes competing unnecessarily among themselves. Secondly, financial incentives could promote sharing, especially bearing in mind that vaccinations, where available, were covered by the public purse and thus free at the point of use.

**Ms. R. Saad** (Egypt), noting that no one was safe until all were safe, said that achievement of the vaccination coverage target of 70 per cent was critical to stemming the spread of COVID-19. The COVAX initiative notwithstanding, there remained a clear discrepancy in vaccination rates between developed and developing countries. In the latter, access to vaccines and diagnostic tools also fell short and low-cost manufacturing of vaccines was obstructed by intellectual property rights. Perhaps attributable to unfair vaccine distribution, the sudden emergence of the new COVID-19 variant underscored the need to unite efforts, without discrimination, for the sake of humanity. In Egypt, a comprehensive State-funded plan was in place to combat the effects of the pandemic and vaccines had been obtained through international cooperation. Such cooperation was essential to redressing the vaccine inequity that would otherwise have economic repercussions far greater than the cost of manufacturing vaccines for equitable distribution on a global scale.

**Mr. B. Rajić** (Slovenia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed significant shortcomings in global preparedness to manage health crises, illustrating the need to improve response planning and response mechanisms. Considering that the current global health architecture was not designed to protect against a future pandemic, it was time to elaborate an internationally binding instrument on pandemics. No country was equipped to address pandemic threats single-handed. Hence, the detection, notification and control of any future public health challenge should be better coordinated and joint actions for countering current and future pandemics urgently identified to restore confidence in global health care. In its own fight against COVID-19, Slovenia emphasized a common approach, solidarity, cross-border vaccination, and the augmentation of vaccine supplies and resilience to unforeseen situations. Parliamentarians must strive to build vaccine confidence and address constituents' concerns. In the recovery period, it would be apposite to globalize such campaigns and offer a cutting-edge approach for all.

**Ms. D. Kumari** (India) said that a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and whole-of-world approach driven by compassion and solidarity was required to overcome the many devastating effects of the pandemic crisis. The vaccine development programme called for collaborative efforts and, to strengthen supply chains and the availability of affordable vaccines for the global South, the issue of an intellectual property rights waiver for COVID-19 vaccines and products must also be resolved. In addition to running its own successful mass vaccination campaign, India – a vastly experienced vaccine producer – remained committed to partnering with interested countries and with COVAX for supplying safe, effective and affordable vaccines for the developing world. It was proud to have supplied, to date, over 70 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to 93 countries and 2 UN entities. Its supplies were furthermore set to increase steadily in the coming weeks and months.

**Mr. M. Karakaya** (Turkey) said that, notwithstanding the range of measures introduced across the world to control and contain COVID-19, vaccination was the definitive solution. A concerted response was key to ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to COVID-19 vaccines, a challenge that necessitated a global vaccination plan and solidarity. In addition to providing assistance to 160 countries and 12 international organizations for fighting the pandemic, Turkey had, through bilateral and international initiatives, supplied 1.5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to 11 countries in support of the global vaccine coverage target. It also planned to partner with the members of the Organization of Turkic States to donate 2 million vaccine doses to African countries in need and would also donate 5 million doses to COVAX.

**Mr. M. Almheri** (United Arab Emirates) said that equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines – critical as a primarily humanitarian and ethical issue – must be accelerated through international cooperation and solidarity. For the desired effectiveness, a collective and participatory approach was needed as part of an integrated and comprehensive system for vaccine production, storage, distribution and intellectual property rights. In that approach, the values of justice, equality, human dignity and the right to life must be upheld for all. For its part, the IPU must work with the United Nations, the WHO, COVAX and other stakeholders to formulate an effective global strategy and action plan for facilitating and speeding up comprehensive equitable access to vaccines. As to parliaments, in addition to actively urging their governments to direct surplus vaccine stock towards developing countries, they must close legal loopholes and review national legislation to resolve issues around intellectual property and the transfer of vaccine production technology to low- and middle-income countries.

**Mr. A. Gryffroy** (Belgium) said that vaccination was instrumental as part of the comprehensive strategy to save lives from the pandemic. A waiver of intellectual property rights was a longer-term solution to vaccine inequity, a problem that also demanded transparency, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building. Other important measures included encouraging vaccine manufacturers to increase production capacity using flexible cooperation models, providing logistics and training for the implementation of widescale vaccination programmes, raising awareness of vaccine efficacy, and engaging communities to reduce vaccine hesitancy. It would be useful to learn more details about the distribution of the 550 million vaccine doses delivered through COVAX to low- and middle-income countries.

**Mr. E. Gomez** (Chief of Staff, UNAIDS), panellist, responding to comments, said that the discussion had clearly underscored the top priority placed by countries on resolving, through solidarity and sharing, the issue of vaccine equity. It was important for parliamentarians to exert healthy pressure on governments to share – and continually so – whatever was available for achieving that end. Many taxpayers were asking whether public investments were optimized to contribute to global health goals. As lawmakers, parliamentarians could truly help to remove the artificial barriers in the way of those goals by exercising their functions to create legal tools and financial incentives to promote sharing and transparency on the part of governments.

**Ms. K. O'Brien** (Director, WHO Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals) panellist, also responding to comments, said that the recent emergence of the new COVID-19 variant had brought home even more poignantly the criticality of the goals of vaccine equity and global vaccination coverage of at least 70 per cent by mid-2022. Indeed, variants emerged as a result of ongoing transmission, which was an outcome of vaccine inequity. Concerning the vaccine doses delivered through COVAX, they had been distributed to 130 countries around the world on the basis of vaccine equity and the capacity of those countries to absorb doses. A shift was under way from a world in which supply was highly constrained to a much more hybrid world of substantially increasing supply.

Some countries, however, were very restricted in their ability to deploy doses, partly due to demand. To improve that situation required political leadership in terms of commitment to setting vaccine coverage targets, establishing a clear mechanism with an all-of-government approach for the planning and deployment of doses, and addressing the very difficult bottlenecks found in every country given the scale of vaccination, which was broader, deeper and wider than ever before. Such leadership was especially vital, too, to building confidence around vaccines and their safety and to prioritizing groups at highest risk of severe disease or death.

Lastly, the strong link between regional vaccine manufacturing and vaccine equity highlighted the need to advance as swiftly as possible, through the hub mechanism and technology transfer, towards guaranteeing vaccine production capacity in every region of the world. To achieve vaccine equity was not only the right thing to do but was a prerequisite from the epidemiological point of view for ending a pandemic that had already lasted longer than anyone had predicted.

**Mr. V. Tsvangirai** (Zimbabwe) said that, to date, his country had purchased 13 million COVID-19 vaccine doses for its population of almost 15 million, 3.2 million of whom had received a first dose and 2.5 million a second, indicating that Zimbabwe was potentially on track to meet the WHO vaccination target. Misinformation spread through social media, however, led to vaccine hesitancy. It would be interesting to hear suggestions as to how to overcome that social media problem, which could affect vaccination uptake, without infringing basic human rights.

**Mr. A.K. Althawadi** (Bahrain) said that concerted efforts must be made to adhere to the US\$ 50 million health, trade and finance road map, unveiled in June 2021 by the heads of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the WHO and the World Trade Organization, for ending the pandemic and securing a global recovery. The road map prioritized vaccine manufacturing, supply, purchase and delivery with the aim of accelerating equitable access to COVID-19 diagnostic and treatment tools for the earliest possible end to the pandemic in developing countries. In Bahrain, public health security had been guaranteed through provision of the full course of COVID-19 vaccinations for all, free of charge. Thanks to preventive measures, compliance and awareness-raising in addition, COVID-19 infections and deaths were falling as immunity rose. It was an individual and collective responsibility to raise community awareness of the importance of vaccination and booster jabs to building that immunity.

**Ms. P. Cayetano** (Philippines) said that, according to recent statistics, only 3 per cent of people in low-income countries had been vaccinated with at least one dose, compared to 60 per cent in high-income countries, where vaccines had been rolled out or even discarded as people elsewhere died. The Philippine Parliament had been instrumental in engaging the Government on vaccine procurement and delivery and in ensuring the necessary budget, while the Senate supported a waiver of relevant TRIPS Agreement provisions on the grounds that COVID-19 vaccines should be considered a global public good exempt from patents and copyrights. In the Philippines, a vaccination drive was in progress to boost the number of vaccinated citizens, amounting to 81 million, including 35 million with two doses. A major concern, however, was the continual demand for its much needed health workers in countries offering higher salaries, which left behind countries like hers in their struggle against the pandemic.

**The Chair** said that an explanation of how the COVAX Facility worked would be welcome.

**Ms. K. O'Brien** (Director, WHO Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals), panellist, responding first to the important question relating to social media, said that misinformation about COVID-19 and other vaccines, as well as about various health interventions, was a rising threat in all countries and had significant implications for vaccine demand and vaccine confidence. Everyone had the means to counter that threat but must ensure that their influence outweighed the negative content available. It was important for communities to understand that social influencers were often not in formal positions of authority. Equally important was their access to clear and accurate content. In sharing information with the public, it must be made plain what information was unavailable, what was known and unknown, and when information could be expected. Misinformation was very difficult to combat other than with a deluge of accurate information. Large social media companies were working on their policies for the removal of demonstrably inaccurate information, with the WHO providing guidance as to what constituted such information. Every country appeared to be undertaking efforts to ensure that people flooded with misinformation as a deliberate tactic had access to accurate information from credible sources.

Concerning the COVAX Facility, which had been set up to provide global equitable access to vaccines, it comprised two components: one in which doses were purchased by self-financing countries and another in which doses were donated or purchased through fund-raising for supply to what were known as the AMC countries, amounting in all to 92. The Facility expected during 2022 to have over 4 billion doses of vaccine for allocation, as they became available, on the basis of vaccine equity and the principle that all countries should have equal access to vaccines, with priority given to those with least access. The Facility currently dealt with eight different vaccines. Other vaccines were still in the process of being authorized. Procuring only vaccines authorized for emergency use by the WHO following a review of the data on their safety, efficacy and manufacturing quality, COVAX continued to look at its portfolio of products for optimizing the availability of vaccines suited to and desired by countries for deployment through their communities. The Facility was closely aligned with the strategy for achieving the 70 per cent global vaccination coverage target, towards which it would be making its own contribution, although it did not have full responsibility for procuring the doses to attain it.

**Mr. M. Al-Naimi** (Qatar) said that his country had contributed US\$ 10 million to the COVAX fund to help developing countries procure their share of COVID-19 vaccines, the major proportion of which key developed countries had initially kept for themselves. Qatar provided vaccine doses free of charge to all inhabitants and would also be providing 1 million doses, likewise free of charge, to World Cup visitors in 2022. The WHO should develop a plan in which every country had a clearly defined role in working for the desired outcome of the fight against the pandemic.

**Mr. M. Zulu** (Zambia) said that his country had been badly affected by COVID-19, which was a reminder that no one was safe if countries continued to be excluded from accessing COVID-19 vaccines and associated products. However high the number of COVID-19 cases in southern Africa, it had always remained incomparable to the number in Europe. The vaccine apartheid must stop. Developed countries had monopolized vaccines while developing countries were receiving very few. Vaccines should also be delivered in a timely manner, rather than taking months to arrive. Some countries, furthermore, such as the Russian Federation, had developed vaccines before others and yet their vaccines had yet to be approved by the WHO, for reasons best known to itself. The approval of vaccines should not be selective.

**Ms. P.T. Masua** (Namibia) said that her country had a relatively small population but struggled with vaccine hesitancy. Parliament was moreover used by some of its members to air their anti-vaccination views. Suggestions on how best to increase vaccination uptake and curtail such views while preserving freedom of expression and choice would be welcome.

**Ms. H. Alhelaissi** (Saudi Arabia), stressing that concerted efforts must be continued to address future pandemics, said that her country had responded rapidly to the COVID-19 pandemic, imposing strict measures and vaccinating its population to reduce the spread of the virus. COVID-19 cases had fallen dramatically as a result. In addition to solidarity, key tools in the fight against the disease included ongoing assessment, screening, early prevention strategies and student awareness-raising. Knowledge must be propagated in countries where misinformation was rampant, vaccination was believed to be ineffective or infringe rights, or vaccines were simply unaffordable. To vaccinate some and not others was futile and would culminate in a catch-22 situation. Advice would be appreciated on how to convince those who refused to be vaccinated that vaccination was effective for themselves and also protected others.

**Mr. E. Bustamante Donayre** (Peru) said that the issues around vaccines concerned not only distribution and equity but also quality. With no two vaccines equal, it was important for all vaccines to undergo a full assessment and be approved by, for example, the WHO, the European Medicines Agency or the United States Food and Drug Administration. Otherwise, an ineffective vaccine might be administered to large numbers of people, which would have consequences. No vaccine should be rolled out unless it had the necessary approval.

**Ms. K. O'Brien** (Director, WHO Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals), panellist, replying to points raised, said with respect to the issue of delivery that contracts for the supply of vaccine doses through whatever method or mechanism were only relevant insofar as manufacturers or donating countries were able to deliver those doses in a timely fashion. In that context, the WHO had been calling for clarity and transparency from manufacturers about the monthly number of doses being produced and their destination. Vaccine manufacturing being a complex process, almost every manufacturer experienced delays. The question was whether the delayed doses were equally distributed across different contracts or being preferentially sent to countries that had paid higher prices or had some other leverage, rather than being prioritized for COVAX and the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT), which were serving countries most in need of doses. All countries and COVAX were very grateful for donated doses, not all of which had the same attributes. In cases where such doses had a short shelf life and their delivery was notified to a country at short notice, it was almost impossible for the country to set up a vaccination programme and stimulate demand in time for them to be used effectively. The WHO very much hoped that donating countries would respond favourably to the joint statement it had issued with AVAT, among others, concerning the nature and quality of dose donations of COVID-19 vaccines.

On the subject of the WHO EUL procedure, every application was held to the same written set of standards. The procedure relied on the information provided by the manufacturer, which could lead to requests for missing or additional information. Manufacturing facilities were inspected, but requirements relating to the timing of quarantine and the scheduling of inspections were sometimes beyond WHO control. The WHO urged all countries and manufacturers with a product that they believed met the requisite standards to make contact at the earliest possible juncture so that the EUL procedure could be promptly initiated. There was absolutely no preference that favoured any one product, country or manufacturer over another. The WHO would fully review any dossier that met the criteria.

Concerning the question about freedom of speech, which was linked with the question about tackling vaccine hesitancy, misinformation could not be eliminated and it was therefore a matter of ensuring that those accessing it had the skills and wherewithal to differentiate between what was and what was not accurate scientific evidence from credible sources. Everyone had a part to play in the task of helping that distinction to be made.

**Mr. E. Gomez** (Chief of Staff, UNAIDS), panellist, replying to points raised around the infodemic, social media and vaccine hesitancy, said that there must be respect for international human rights law, which benefited everyone in the long term and in difficult moments, which was precisely when that respect was most needed. It was important to work with, and not against, communities to create trust and promote rational behaviour, something in which parliamentarians could play a key role.

Concerning the problem of retaining health workers, it was disheartening to see those workers being applauded when nothing was being done to increase their numbers, which left them exhausted. Parliamentarians and global health agencies such as UNAIDS and the WHO should issue a collective call for action to address that situation. In conclusion, he would be happy to share with participants, through the IPU Secretariat, the earlier-mentioned report *Unequal, unprepared, under threat*, which had been issued that very day on the occasion of World AIDS Day and was germane to fighting pandemics effectively.

**The Chair** said that the report would be welcome and surely of particular interest to many participants. He thanked the panellists for their contribution to enlightening the Committee on complex issues.

### **The United Nations Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda**

**The Chair**, introducing the item, recalled that the declaration on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, adopted in September 2020, included 12 commitments to tackle urgent global challenges within a stronger multilateral framework. Named Our Common Agenda, those commitments were aimed at resetting global efforts towards a more sustainable, just and peaceful world, with the United Nations leading the way. Following consultations with parliaments and other stakeholders, including the IPU, which had participated in all the related processes, the UN Secretary-General had issued a major report, in September 2021, with recommendations on how to implement Our Common Agenda. Among other things, he had undertaken to explore options to enhance parliamentary input at the United Nations, working with existing partners. Following a presentation of the report, participants would have the opportunity to contribute thoughts and feedback.

**Ms. M. Griffin** (Policy Advisor, Executive Office of the Secretary-General), presenting the Secretary-General's report, said that, in the run-up to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, it had already been clear that multilateralism was under considerable strain and that collective efforts were falling short in controlling or delivering solutions to the most pressing problems – let alone addressing them in durable ways – as evidenced by galloping climate change and the relative ineffectiveness of climate action, growing mistrust between institutions and people, rising protests, populism and disaffection, staggering levels of inequality and poverty, increasing hate speech, and record levels of displacement and conflict. Those problems had been thrown into even sharper relief by the advent of COVID-19, which had brought home the urgent need for collective solutions to address challenges, including proactively. They had also highlighted the paradox that such solutions were more critical than ever but, in some respects, harder to achieve. Against that backdrop, it was somewhat remarkable that Member States had resolved to mandate the Secretary-General to give recommendations on how to advance the common agenda and respond to current and future challenges, as it committed them to 12 major goals outlined in very bold language. The more obvious of those goals included protecting the planet, abiding by international law and ensuring justice, placing women and girls at the centre, building trust, and boosting partnerships through stronger engagement with the many stakeholders recognized as having leverage over key problems.



The report had been prepared with an emphasis on inclusive multilateralism and the involvement of all those stakeholders in developing and generating ideas to include in Our Common Agenda for consideration by Member States and the global audience. Feeding into the process had been the findings of an extensive global listening exercise, conducted in 2020 through dialogues, opinion polls and surveys, which had confirmed, even before the COVID-19 outbreak, the strength of appetite for multilateralism and collective solutions to problems shared in an interconnected world. Additional ideas for the report had been generated through four tracks dedicated to engaging specific groups in the process, namely: prominent thought leaders; youth; civil society, including parliamentarians; and Member States. For many of the thousands of participants from around the world, the exercise had provided the first-ever opportunity for them to offer ideas and engage in consultation with the United Nations.

Our Common Agenda was therefore a landmark report of long-term relevance. Serving as a wake-up call, its overarching message was that business as usual was no guarantee of life as usual. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the massive rise in inequality and disabling destabilization were among the factors pointing to a breakdown scenario. Unless the world changed course, it would grow steadily more uninhabitable, face far worse pandemics and be increasingly destabilized by the levels of inequality, with lack of trust in public institutions further eroding the ability to resolve problems collectively. The report argued in favour of a much more positive path, holding that multilateralism and collective problem-solving were already working reasonably well in cases where necessary will, resources and mutual trust were present. Its thrust was that solidarity was not charity but self-interest.

The report set out over 90 recommendations in four areas, each covered by a separate chapter. The proposals in the first of those chapters, concerning a renewed social contract anchored in human rights, were aimed at addressing the roots of the current global unease, including poverty and inequality. Based on the rationale that bonds between countries struggled to survive when bonds within countries were broken, the objective of those proposals was to rebuild public trust in institutions through a global code of conduct that promoted integrity in public information to tackle the infodemic; introduce measures for dealing with tax evasion, illicit financial flows and corruption; reinvigorate thinking around human rights, especially human rights online; achieve universal social protection, including in particular universal health care; eradicate violence against women and girls as well as aid recognition of the incredibly strong links between that and other forms of violence and between misogyny and terrorism, conflict and all manner of problems; correct the blind spot in how economic prosperity and progress were measured; and work to complement gross domestic product with other measures that took into account such factors as well-being and sustainability.

The second such chapter focused on shaping the future of succeeding generations – as promised in the preamble to the UN Charter – of whom 10 billion were yet to be born in the current century, most of them in Africa and Asia. The related proposals were centred on transformative measures in the areas of education, skills, training and lifelong learning and included a call for an education summit in 2022 and the creation of a UN youth office in the interest of more effectively engaging with young people and taking into account their needs. Other proposals aimed at future generations included establishing a futures laboratory to utilize the increased capacity for predicting and modelling the impact of decisions on future generations, examine intergovernmental decision-making, and explore means of taking into account that impact globally, possibly by way of a declaration on future generations. A further proposal was for the Secretary-General to appoint a special envoy for future generations.

The third of the chapters, in arguing for a review of thinking around protection of the global commons and the delivery of global public goods, set out urgent proposals around health in relation to, among others, the pandemic, equitable vaccine distribution, WHO empowerment, and preparedness for inevitable future pandemics. It also contained proposals for how better to manage the global economy and take much more effective action on climate change. Many of the report's recommendations had a valid association with the outcomes of the recent UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow – commonly referred to as COP26 – and included a call for greater inclusion of all stakeholders in climate action and in the global stocktaking in 2023, greater interaction on biodiversity and food systems, and a doubling down on the commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Longer term, the report suggested possible tracks towards a summit of the future, in 2023, to forge a new consensus on how collectively to resolve challenges. One such track was to develop a new agenda for peace in the light of changes in the peace and security landscape since the foundation of the United Nations and update the thinking and the toolbox to take account of the multitude of new realities, including digital and hybrid strategic risks, nuclear weapon capabilities, and the links between violence of all forms. Also advocated were a multi-stakeholder dialogue on peaceful uses of outer space, a global digital compact, and more concerted efforts to build preparedness and capacity to address major risks, including unforeseen threats, and be mindful of the rights and needs of future generations in decision-making. To those ends, the Secretary-General proposed the establishment of a high-level advisory board on global public goods, to be led by two former heads of State and government, to improve governance of those goods and the global commons.

The final such chapter, on adapting the United Nations to the new era of challenges outlined in the report, made a distinction between actions that could be taken within the UN system and by the Secretary-General himself and actions that Member States might wish to consider. Examples of systemic actions included harnessing data, making much greater use of behavioural science, innovation and all available tools for foresight, and taking steps to engage more strongly and strategically with parliamentarians, local and regional governments, civil society and regional organizations. The many ideas for consideration by Member States included that of using the Trusteeship Council as a deliberative forum to act on behalf of future generations. The Secretary-General stood ready to support Member States should they choose to embark on reforms of other UN organs, such as making the Security Council more representative of the current world and expanding the Peacebuilding Commission to give it a more meaningful role. Member States should also make fuller use of human rights mechanisms.

As to next steps, the General Assembly had in the preceding week adopted a resolution welcoming the report, and work was under way to engage with Member States in following up on its ideas, especially those relating to intergovernmental action or possible national action, which the United Nations would be glad to support. The United Nations was already starting to implement the 50 or more recommendations in the report that were within its existing mandates and prerogatives, discussing with Member States and within the system ways of taking them forward substantially before the proposed summit of the future in 2023.

Those recommendations included further systematic engagement with other stakeholders, including parliamentarians, which built on the strong language in the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations around boosting partnerships and giving parliamentarians a more systematic role in global decision-making. The Secretary-General was firmly committed to exploring options to enhance parliamentary inputs at the United Nations and invited parliamentarians to contribute their ideas as to the best ways and means of so doing and of harnessing the opportunity of the proposed summit of the future to advise Member States as to how their intergovernmental decision-making mechanisms might offer wider scope for such inputs. The role of parliamentarians in implementing the ideas set out in Our Common Agenda went well beyond any kind of intergovernmental input made in New York and would play out most in their local and national settings with respect to bolstering the social contract, rebuilding public trust in institutions and information received, ensuring that succeeding generations were borne in mind in decision-making, and turning global promises into national actions through legislation, regulation, oversight or budgets. In sum, the role of parliamentarians ran across and throughout the ideas set out in the report.

**Ms. J. Oduol** (Kenya), expressing great appreciation for the report and noting the need to build back better from the pandemic for the health and safety of all, said that Our Common Agenda provided welcome indicators of actions to be taken not only multilaterally but also nationally by parliamentarians in their role as mediators between State institutions and the diverse communities whom they represented – including future generations – who wanted clear demonstrations of parliamentarians acting in their interests. The Kenyan Parliament remained committed to that role, together with its legislative and oversight functions, and was especially keen for youth to take centre stage as the voice for the future. It hoped that it could manage the bureaucracy that sometimes hampered its aspirations.

**Ms. M. Griffin** (Policy Advisor, Executive Office of the Secretary-General) said that she looked forward to working with parliamentarians and their countries in New York and was gratified to learn that so many of the ideas in the report struck a chord, in particular those relating to youth and the importance of taking their rights and needs – as well as those of future generations – into account in national and global decision-making. The hope was that the report would in due course be seen as a turning point in the UN's willingness and ability to hear and respect the youth voice.

**Mr. M. Garoyian** (Cyprus) said that the COVID-19 pandemic and its severe repercussions were no excuse to halt the joint efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which must instead be stepped up in solidarity with those most affected by current challenges. Steered by the 12 commitments infusing Our Common Agenda, and through approving budgets, holding governments to account and connecting them with the people, IPU Members had a significant role to play in rebuilding the world from the pandemic crisis in a systemic shift towards more inclusive economies, more resilient, just and equal societies, improved digital cooperation and more effective youth engagement. The global interdependence and interconnectivity highlighted by the pandemic called above all for a stronger, inclusive and effective multilateralism within the framework of the United Nations, for which parliaments must demonstrate the greatest will so as to secure a better, greener and more peaceful future for all, including generations to come.

**Mr. M. Agha Tehrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Secretary-General's report set out new concepts and proposals worthy of in-depth discussion and serious consideration. To build the future, it was important to retain past commitments at the same time as focusing attention on threats and challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international social and economic cooperation, which, together with non-interference in the internal affairs of States, were among the principles articulated in the UN Charter. While numerous global principles, objectives and values had evolved over the preceding 75 years, the sovereignty of States remained as a strong foundation of the existing world order, a fundamental principle to be respected by Our Common Agenda, which should also address the pervasive injustices plaguing the current age and responsible for underdevelopment and conflict. His country was carefully examining the report and its recommendations from various angles and perspectives.

**Ms. D. Kumari** (India) said that the many proposals for action in Our Common Agenda were in line with the SDGs and designed to accelerate their achievement, towards which her country had made steady progress, making strides in its socioeconomic and environmental development over the preceding year. The important proposals, ideas and vision captured in the Secretary-General's report, including its focus on climate change, were commendable. India was the only G20 country on track to meet its targets under the Paris Agreement. Albeit comprehensive, the report could have perhaps placed emphasis on terrorism as a threat to international peace and security and a major obstacle to the successful implementation of Our Common Agenda. Her hope was that the actions proposed in the report would be finalized through State-driven processes – as in the case of the SDGs, which differentiated them positively from the Millennium Development Goals – to ensure that they were truly common and owned by all.

**Mr. M. Almheri** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Secretary-General's report reflected the critical priority of protecting and upholding the value of human beings and Earth. Global and transnational challenges could be transformed into great opportunities through solidarity and teamwork, requiring in addition collective action, rational government and strong institutions. His country had been among the first to support humanitarian initiatives during the pandemic, had reaffirmed its commitment at COP26, offered to host COP28 in 2023, and intended to be the first in the region to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Its Parliamentary Division emphasized the centrality of issues around coexistence, tolerance, discrimination, violence and hatred in policymaking; empowerment of women and youth in all spheres; and the important place of modern technology and artificial intelligence in Our Common Agenda. His question was how parliaments, in cooperation with the United Nations, could contribute to legislative work that kept pace with all developments and crises proactively instead of reactively.

**Mr. V. Tsvangirai** (Zimbabwe), with reference to improving digital cooperation, suggested the establishment of a committee to explore the potential of digital currency and its formalization, one advantage of which would be to reduce financial corruption. On another note, the pandemic and the vaccine roll-out served as a lesson on how not to leave countries behind – a lesson that should be applied in future, especially in view of the focus on building back better and greener. The need to include youth in decision-making resonated very closely with him as a young African from a continent with a majority youth population. Young activists around the world were making headway on global issues, including climate change and women's rights, and could not be excluded from global politics. As the pandemic had shown, apocalyptic fantasies could quickly become reality, which is what would happen if the content of Our Common Agenda were not taken seriously.

**Ms. G. Hooper** (United Kingdom) said that the pandemic and climate change issues had increased recognition of the world as an interdependent global village. Greater access to technology and communications and frequent use of virtual meetings provided more opportunities for cultural cooperation. Examples of the common agenda included COP26, hosted in Glasgow by her country, a parliamentary day organized by the British Group IPU and the Italian authorities to secure parliamentary engagement in the conference, and cooperation on the pandemic. Information on steps being taken to address migration as a global challenge caused by evil people traffickers would be welcome. Parliamentarians needed to be kept updated on UN actions in the 12 areas outlined in Our Common Agenda. In the United Kingdom Parliament, all-party parliamentary groups worked in depth on such matters as the SDGs, multilateral disarmament, and UN affairs, doing much to identify issues and monitor progress.

**Mr. J. Razarindriatsara** (Madagascar) said that the Secretary-General's report underscored the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and parliaments through the multilateral framework embodied in Our Common Agenda. A more equitable, more sustainable and more peaceful world could not be created without people. As representatives of the global population, parliamentarians must work closely with the United Nations, while the people whom they represented must be kept abreast of peace efforts.

**Ms. C.I. López Castro** (Mexico) said that the pandemic had starkly highlighted the difference between developed and developing countries, especially those in Africa without sufficient access to COVID-19 vaccines. The United Nations and developed countries should be urged to support countries badly affected by COVID-19, primarily in Africa, by donating vaccine supplies without delay for their use, failing which there would be further waves of COVID-19 leading to yet further deaths.

**Ms. F. Ilimi** (Algeria) said that bilateral and multilateral cooperation had shifted its focus towards finding solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, a shared fate that had given rise to new solidarity, a united collective response and innovative mechanisms such as the COVAX Facility. As part of that response, Algeria had contributed to the Secretary-General's COVID-19 *Response and Recovery Trust Fund* and the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund. It had also benefited from COVAX support in the form of 5 million vaccine doses and from medical and other aid provided by the European Union and the United States of America. Algeria was actively committed to supporting neighbouring countries, including Mauritania and Tunisia, and Sahel countries such as Mali and Niger, with humanitarian and medical aid. With Chinese support, it had recently begun manufacturing vaccines. Parliamentarians must establish a strategy for combating the pandemic and preventing further waves of infection for the sake of global economic recovery.

**Ms. M. Griffin** (Policy Advisor, Executive Office of the Secretary-General), responding to comments, said that she was grateful for the references made to the SDGs, as they had called to her attention the glaring omission she had made in failing to mention the SDGs in her presentation and the extent to which the Secretary-General's report was built on, and consistent with, the SDGs and sought to amplify and accelerate their implementation and certainly in no way distract from it. All ideas in the report had been mapped against the SDGs and their targets, revealing very significant overlaps between the two.

With respect to concerns about non-interference in internal affairs, many of the ideas in the report were for countries to consider taking in the national setting. The Secretary-General had no interest in imposing those ideas, which were simply offered for consideration in the context of a global pandemic and which he strongly felt needed to be thought about collectively. The United Nations stood ready to support countries wishing to move forward on any of them. The report nonetheless contained many ideas directed at intergovernmental bodies and global decision-makers.

The point made about terrorism was well taken. A report such as Our Common Agenda was necessarily somewhat selective, but terrorism would be taken fully into account in the work on the proposed new agenda for peace and in other follow-up to the report. Also well taken was the point about ownership of the SDGs; it should indeed be fully protected and the United Nations was already engaged in a deep conversation with Member States about follow-up to the report and looked forward to working with them in that context. As to how parliamentarians could contribute to related legislative work, the United Nations also looked forward to continued direct engagement with the IPU, its Members and their governments to explore ideas, including some of those expressed during the discussion. The idea about digital currency, for example, would be further examined and was well taken, as was the point about learning lessons from the vaccine roll-out to ensure that no one was left behind. The Secretary-General had been among the earliest – and remained among the strongest and most consistent – voices in favour of equitable vaccine roll-out and against vaccine hoarding by wealthy countries while others were unable to vaccinate even their most vulnerable groups, with consequences that he and the WHO had been cautioning about now coming home to roost.

She agreed about the benefits of virtual meetings, an example of which was that she would otherwise have been unable to participate in the current discussion. The United Nations very much hoped that future iterations of multilateralism would take advantage of all the ways in which technology, notably during the pandemic, had encouraged different forms of working and consultation that reached people never before reached and enabled them to take part in conversations for the first time ever. It was hoped virtual interactions would be retained in any return to post-pandemic normalcy. In preparing the Secretary-General's report, every effort had been made – and would continue in the follow-up work – to take advantage of the benefits offered by digital consultations and virtual tools in order to increase inclusiveness and voices heard. Concerning migration, another point well taken, she drew attention to the strong reference made in the report to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, both of which the United Nations urged governments to continue implementing as the most important means of addressing the issue.

With reference to people in the pandemic, she read out a press release coincidentally issued a few moments earlier by the Secretary-General on travel restrictions related to COVID-19, which could be found at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/260892>.

She expressed gratitude for the contributions made to the two COVID-19 response funds and for the acknowledgement of support received from the COVAX Facility. The Secretary-General's report attempted to indicate where multilateralism was working better than realized. The hope was that parliamentarians would be among the voices reminding people of the crucial point that many things were working well and that, despite the woefully unequal response to COVID-19 and the woeful lack of global solidarity in that context, there had also been miracles exemplified in the science and in the uniting of communities to offer mutual support. Had COVID-19 emerged a decade earlier, it would have taken very much longer without the entities and technology that now existed to develop and distribute effective vaccines and there would have been many millions more deaths. While there remained a long way to go in improving multilateral responses to shared global challenges, many things were working and lessons on which to build were being continually learned. The important message to be reinforced from the report was that, with the necessary will, mutual trust and solidarity, much could already be achieved together by listening to the science and using the available tools to address challenges.

**The Chair**, noting the timeliness of the Secretary-General's valuable press release in view of the subject of the emergency item under consideration by the Assembly, expressed thanks and appreciation to Ms. Griffin for her very informative presentation.

## **Elections**

### **(a) Elections to fill existing vacancies on the Bureau**

**The Chair** said that the candidacies received to fill vacancies on the Bureau were, for the Arab Group, Mr. A. Almutairi of Kuwait; for the Eurasia Group, Ms. H. Tigranyan of Armenia and Ms. E. Qatravi of Moldova; for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. C.I. López Castro of Mexico; and for the Twelve Plus Group, Ms. E. Lindh of Sweden. He took it that the Committee wished to elect those candidates to the Bureau.

*It was so decided.*

**(b) Election of the President and Vice-President of the Committee**

**The Chair** said that, in line with the agreed system of rotation among the geopolitical groups for the positions of Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Standing Committees, Ms. S. Abdi Noor of Kenya for the African Group and Mr. L. Wehrli of Switzerland for the Twelve Plus Group had been selected for the positions of President and Vice-President, respectively, for a two-year term.

**Ms. C.I. López Castro** (Mexico), seconded by **Mr. E. Bustamante Donayre** (Peru), said that candidates for the position of President should be in attendance and that she would not therefore support the Kenyan candidate, who was absent, proposing herself instead as the candidate.

**The Chair** said that the proposed candidate had been selected in accordance with the established procedure and that candidates were not required to be present. In any event, the Kenyan candidate was absent owing to a death in her family, which must be taken into account in addition to the current pandemic situation.

**Mr. V. Tsvangirai** (Zimbabwe), in confirming that the African Group had been informed at its recent meeting of that death, said that the Kenyan representatives had been granted their request for leave of absence to attend a conflicting engagement. Were it not for that engagement, they would have been present at the current sitting.

**Ms. C.I. López Castro** (Mexico) said that, given Africa's need to support and cooperation in its fight for access to the COVID-19 vaccine, it was only fair for an African representative to be selected as President of the Committee. It was important, however, for that representative to be present at the Committee's meetings.

**The Chair**, underlining the importance of solidarity and understanding while also noting that the rules on the matter were perfectly clear, said he took it that the Committee wished to elect the proposed candidates for the positions of President and Vice-President.

*It was so decided.*

**Any other business**

**Ms. B. Brenner** (Office of the Permanent Observer of the IPU to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna), speaking at the invitation of the Chair to introduce herself and her work, said that she was the new representative of the IPU at the United Nations in Vienna, which was a hub for interesting topics of relevance to the Committee's work, including disarmament, nuclear energy and safeguards, crime, and corruption. Through its work, her office aimed to strengthen the impact of the IPU in the United Nations context, including by contributing to the interaction between the two on all topics, and was always at the disposal of IPU Members.

**Mr. V. Tsvangirai** (Zimbabwe) said that he would welcome information as to how parliaments could work in conjunction with the United Nations to speed up the treaty ratification process so as to eliminate delays between the signing of a treaty and its ratification, which also delayed the incorporation of treaties into national law.

**Ms. B. Brenner** (Office of the Permanent Observer of the IPU to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna) said that the question echoed the IPU's desire to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations for such purposes, as well as for ensuring parliamentary input from an early stage into the work of the United Nations and informing parliaments of activities, including negotiations, in which their governments were involved. Parliaments could then exert influence and contribute to work in due time, in line with their democratic role, rather than react after the event.

**Ms. P. Torsney** (Office of the Permanent Observer of the IPU to the United Nations in New York) said that it was the long-standing practice of the IPU office in New York to alert parliaments to UN activities and promote the participation of their members in UN processes, including by bringing them to New York. The office was always keen to learn about Members with expert knowledge of a topic that would enable them to engage fully in – and make substantial contributions to – those activities and processes. Members were encouraged to consult the events page on the IPU website and request to be part of delegations attending the events listed. The New York office would continue that practice and looked forward to working with Members.

**The Chair**, following an exchange of courtesies, declared the sitting closed.

*The sitting rose at 18:00.*

## Forum of Women Parliamentarians

### SITTING OF FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER

(Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 10:30 with Ms. L. Vasylenko (Ukraine), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, in the Chair.*

#### Opening of the session

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** opened the session and thanked the Parliament of Spain for having organized an in-person meeting at such a difficult time. The 143rd IPU Assembly was an important opportunity to put gender equality at the top of the agenda for all parliaments. The Forum would discuss the theme of the Assembly: *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*. Polarization was growing and leading to a culture of hatred and intolerance. The COVID-19 pandemic had increased inequalities, divisions and online violence. There was an urgent need, therefore, to strengthen democracies and build back better. A gender perspective was required when considering how to enhance trust, bring people and institutions closer together and make parliaments more inclusive of women and other underrepresented groups of society. The pandemic had highlighted the importance of well-functioning democracies to respond to the pressing, varied needs of society. Despite the challenging circumstances, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians had continued to lead the way in gender-responsive parliamentary action on many fronts, which had inspired parliamentarians around the world to act on gender equality in spite of the context of the pandemic.

#### Election of the President of the 32nd session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FEM/32/1-Inf.1)

*As recommended by Ms. M. Al Suwaidi (United Arab Emirates) and Ms. E. Anyakun (Uganda), Ms. M. Batet Lamaña, President of the Congress of Deputies (Spain) was, by acclamation, elected President of the 32nd session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.*

#### Welcoming remarks

**The President of the Forum** said that the normalized presence of women in all areas of public life and decision-making was the key to mainstreaming a gender perspective in the public agenda. The increasing number of women speakers of parliament was a demonstration of growing commitment to gender equality. The Forum of Women Parliamentarians had made great strides in fighting to increase the number of women parliamentarians, and was an invaluable force for awareness-raising and synergy-building, and for bringing gender equality to parliaments, not only in terms of equality in representation but also with regard to the elimination of gender-based violence. Parliaments must enact legislative frameworks that protected women, not only to eliminate *de jure* discrimination, but also to eliminate discrimination in practice in all walks of life. Equality before the law would enable action to be taken to ensure equality in the private sphere, and, where necessary, for redress to be granted. Violence against women must be eradicated; it constituted a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which threatened the social and democratic development of States.

The theme of the 143rd IPU Assembly, *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community* acknowledged inequality as a threat to all democratic processes. Efforts to remove invisible discrimination required constant work and cooperation. All measures and initiatives to promote gender equality must be strengthened. Constant work and cooperation would be essential. The Government of Spain was committed to ensuring freedom and equality for all citizens. In that regard, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women was an absolute priority.



**The President of the IPU** said he wished to thank the Government and Parliament of Spain for their strong belief in the importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue, which had underpinned their efforts to host an in-person IPU Assembly during times of unprecedented challenge. The Government of Spain had also demonstrated its commitment to gender issues and inclusivity. Inclusive democracy could not exist without equal representation of men and women in parliament. Gender equality and women's empowerment were at the top of the IPU's agenda. The Forum of Women Parliamentarians helped to ensure that the perspectives of women were taken into account in all aspects of the IPU's work. In 2021, led by the Forum, the IPU had continued to advance gender equality, including through inter-parliamentary deliberations to mobilize a gender-responsive post-COVID-19 recovery. At the Generation Equality Forum, the IPU had advocated for placing parity in political decision-making at the core of actions for gender equality. The IPU had also organized a successful Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in Vienna, and was supporting inter-parliamentary cooperation for women's empowerment at the regional level.

The IPU defended gender parity in political participation; inclusive leadership drove stronger governance and better outcomes. Where needed, transformative measures, such as quotas, must be applied. Gender-sensitive parliaments should be open not only to women's participation but also to their influence and leadership. The barriers to women's participation must be dismantled, including gender-based discrimination, sexism and gender-based violence in politics. The recent IPU and African Parliamentary Union regional study of parliaments in Africa had provided new evidence-based information on the persistence of violence against women in legislative institutions, which must be eliminated.

Legislative frameworks must not discriminate against women and must be gender-responsive. Now more than ever, more effective and equal legal guarantees were needed for men and women to fulfil their potential. Parliamentary oversight must be reinforced. The meeting of the Forum should be an occasion to exchange knowledge and lessons learned, and to step up accountability for women and girls. Gender equality must be built into education curricula; education was the key to learning and lasting change. 2021 had shown the need to build better, stronger and more resilient societies. Parliamentarians could and would make a difference. Gender equality required strong cooperation. Men must join the fight for gender equality; only together would it be possible to build a better and more equitable society.

**Mr. P. Sánchez** (Prime Minister of Spain) said that the 143rd Assembly would afford an important opportunity to forge connections for joint action on a multitude of issues, in particular with regard to optimizing the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, tackling climate change, overcoming inequality and countering the erosion of trust in democratic institutions. To strengthen democracy, parliaments themselves must be strengthened to ensure they were inclusive, innovative, representative and capable of supporting societies. The theme of the Assembly was therefore particularly important and the Madrid Declaration, to be adopted at the end of the deliberations, would be a clear statement of the commitment to overcome political challenges and seek consensus, reduce polarization, eliminate hate speech, and bring democratic institutions closer to the public. Dialogue and cooperation were crucial to meeting the great challenges facing humanity. Without them, polarization would continue to undermine democracies.

Mistrust was growing, as was lack of empathy for difference, as people felt further and further removed from democratic institutions. The Forum for Women Parliamentarians had a key role to play in overcoming those challenges; bringing women into politics was one of the best methods of reducing polarization and promoting dialogue and compromise. In Spain, every effort was being made, in particular in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, to foster political commitment to equality, in an inclusive and coordinated process involving local governments.

Achieving parity in parliament was a challenge. Spain had the most egalitarian parliament in the European Union, with 46 per cent of seats held by women. In the executive, 63 per cent of ministers were women. The composition of Spain's legislative and executive had changed beyond recognition in the course of 40 years. Parity between men and women should be sought in all aspects of life. One of the major steps to ensure women's political representation had been the adoption, in 2007, of a law on parity, which had made equal gender representation in parliament a legal obligation and had pushed political parties to strengthen their commitment by guaranteeing that for each male candidate on electoral lists, a female candidate was also put forward. The law had also introduced gender equality in other areas, including the judiciary and high-level positions in major ministries, such as health, labour and finance. The first, second and third Vice-Prime Ministers of Spain were women. The ministers of justice, finance, industry and defence were women. Gender equality was thus in the DNA of the Spanish Government, and was integral to all public policies. Spain's ranking in the Gender Equality Index had improved significantly over recent years. Yet more could, of course, always be done.

In Spain, measures taken by the Government and civil society had resulted in an increase in women's participation in public institutions and in private enterprises. A significant funding increase had been allocated to the Ministry for Equality, which had contributed to the development of new policies on gender issues, including on the prevention of violence against women. A new law on education had been enacted that provided for a gender dimension in schooling, to embed gender equality in all aspects of education and children's development, as well as to promote tolerance and diversity, raise awareness of gender-based violence and ensure that gender was mainstreamed in all subjects. Special attention was being paid to childhood and adolescence, in particular to protect young people against violence and abuse, especially online. Legislation for child protection had been enacted, which criminalized online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and included provisions on victim rehabilitation and teaching children about online safety. A roadmap of digital rights had been approved, which was the first of its kind. Further legislation had been enacted strengthening sanctions against perpetrators of sexual crimes against minors.

All of the work done and progress made must be protected; gender equality could never be taken for granted. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Spain's parliamentarians had committed to putting party differences aside to work together to take stronger measures and allocate more funding to ensure the elimination of violence against women.

### **Adoption of the agenda** (FEM/32/A.1)

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Recent activities to advance gender equality**

#### **(a) Report of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians**

**Ms. M. Baba Moussa Soumanou** (Benin), Rapporteur for the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, presented the report on the work of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, which had met in March and May 2021. The Bureau had renewed half of its membership, and had nominated Ms. L. Vasylenko (Ukraine) as its President and Ms. H. Ramzy Fayez (Bahrain) as its First Vice-President. Those nominations had been approved by the Forum at its 31st session. Ms. W. Andrade Muñoz (Ecuador) had been nominated Second Vice-President. The Forum would be called on to approve that nomination during its current session.

The Bureau had met by videoconference to define its vision and plan its work for the following months. Given the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls and the additional challenges posed to gender equality, the Bureau had committed to increase initiatives to promote equality between women and men and accelerate progress in and through parliament. To that end, transformative actions from national parliaments had been identified to: legislate for gender equality and lift any legal barriers for women and girls' rights; strengthen women's involvement and leadership in climate action and the mitigation of climate change; reach gender parity in parliament and promote the participation of diverse groups of women in decision-making; and eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls, with a focus on putting an end to sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament and in politics.

The Bureau's vision and focus areas of work had been aligned with the actions highlighted by the Generation Equality Forum. The IPU was a co-leader of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on feminist movements and leadership, which adhered to the IPU's vision of driving a feminist agenda through gender parity in decision-making and gender-responsive and inclusive processes. The Bureau hoped that all IPU Member Parliaments would take that vision forward. The Bureau had also considered how to better engage men in gender equality. In the context of the 143rd IPU Assembly, a parity debate would be held on 29 November, on the theme *Are men and women MPs equally engaged in gender equality?* The debate could not take place without men. It was crucial to understand how to motivate and support men's engagement in gender equality. She urged all members of the Forum to participate and to encourage their male colleagues to attend.

*Ms. M. Batet Lamaña, President of the 32nd session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, took the Chair.*

## (b) Report of the Gender Partnership Group

**Ms. A.D. Mergane Kanouté** (Senegal), Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee, said that the Gender Partnership Group comprised: Ms. L. Vasylenko (Ukraine), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians; Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates); Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan) and herself. It would meet on 29 November 2021 to examine the participation of women and the integration of the gender dimension in the 143rd IPU Assembly, its decision-making bodies and national delegations. At the 141st IPU Assembly, the Gender Partnership Group had proposed amendments to the Statutes and Rules of the IPU, which had strengthened sanctions against delegations that did not respect the guidance on gender balance. Since the adoption of those amendments, there had been an increase in women's representation on national delegations to IPU Assemblies.

At the virtual 142nd IPU Assembly in May 2021, women had accounted for 38 per cent of participants, which had been the highest proportion on record. At the present Assembly, 37.7 per cent of registered delegates were women. Despite an overall improvement in the situation, work remained to be done. Of the 11 single sex delegations of two people or more registered at the current Assembly, 10 were male only. Regarding working environment, at the 141st IPU Assembly in Belgrade, the Group had launched a process to draw up a framework to prevent and eliminate sexism and sexual harassment at Assemblies and other IPU meetings. No organization was immune from gender-based discrimination and violence. The IPU must lead by example. The Gender Partnership Group called on all parliaments to cooperate on gender equality and women's empowerment. With political will, parity could be achieved.

## (c) Update on recent IPU activities for the promotion of gender equality 13th Summit of Women Parliamentarians (FEM/32/4(c)-Inf.1)

**Ms. P. Maharani** (Indonesia) said that the 13th Summit of Women Parliamentarians had taken place on 6 September 2021 in Vienna, Austria, hosted by the IPU, the Parliament of Austria and the United Nations, on the occasion of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. A total of 155 participants had attended, including 26 women speakers of parliament. The theme of the Summit, *Women at the centre: From confronting the pandemic to preserving achievements in gender-responsive recovery*, had allowed speakers to reflect on how the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had added to existing inequalities. Participants had discussed the essential role of women during the pandemic, and how post-pandemic recovery could lead to progress in gender equality.

The Summit had been divided into two sessions, during the first, *Women in the pandemic: A tribute to everyday heroes*, participants had heard that during the pandemic response, 70 per cent of health workers had been women. Women scientists, doctors and nurses continued to work on the front line of the pandemic. Tribute had also been paid to women decision-makers, women in positions of power and women journalists, who had been instrumental in navigating societies through the difficult times brought about by the pandemic. There was an urgent need to encourage and support women's representation in all public and private spheres of leadership.

The second session, *Women in the post-pandemic recovery: Preserving achievements, furthering progress*, had acknowledged that economic empowerment should come in the form of universal, gender-responsive social protection schemes. Currently, 60 per cent of women worldwide were not covered by any type of social protection. Participants had agreed that social protection policies should be amended to better support women, in particular those in vulnerable situations. With regard to challenges related to violence against women and children, participants had discussed how speakers of parliament must strengthen their efforts to eradicate such violence. Policies must address root causes of inequality by empowering girls and ensuring that they had access to education. The outcome of the Summit had emphasized the need for economic and social transformation from a gender perspective. Parliamentarians had a duty to lead such transformation, to ensure fair allocation of resources and equality of opportunities in the future.

**Regional study on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa**  
(FEM/32/4(c)-Inf.3)

**The Secretary of the Forum** said that violence against women in politics and in parliament was understood to mean all acts of violence directed against women because of their gender, aiming to discourage them from political engagement and ultimately to eject them from political life. There was a normative framework committing States and parliaments to end violence against women in politics. The IPU had a responsibility to explore and reveal the prevalence of violence against women in parliament and its impacts on their access to political institutions and their ability to pursue a political career. Studies had therefore been conducted to fill the data gap and gather evidence-based information in that regard. A global study had been conducted in 2016, and a regional study had been conducted in Europe in 2018. The latest study had been conducted in Africa. Similar studies would be conducted in all regions to finetune the findings and understand the specific forms and prevalence of violence against women in parliament.

The study for Africa had been conducted through a series of confidential interviews with 224 women from 50 African countries, 137 of whom had been parliamentarians and 87 of whom had been female members of parliamentary staff. Questions had related to the prevalence and forms of violence, perpetrators and the settings in which violence took place. The responses had shown that psychological violence was the most prevalent form of violence against women parliamentarians. Of the respondents, 80 per cent reported being victims of psychological violence: 67 per cent had encountered sexist behaviour and remarks, 46 per cent had been the target of sexist attacks online, 42 per cent had received threats of death, rape and beating, and 39 per cent had faced intimidation, all of which were used to seek to silence women in parliament. The study had also investigated the prevalence of sexual, physical and economic violence. Of the respondents, 39 per cent had experienced sexual violence: 40 per cent had been harassed and 9 per cent had known “sextortion” (demands for sexual favours). Furthermore, 23 per cent had experienced physical violence and 29 per cent had been exposed to economic violence.

In comparison with the results of the global and European studies, levels of psychological, physical and economic violence in Africa were similar, but levels of sexual violence were significantly higher. Contextual factors to explain that disparity included the prevalence of conflict and post-conflict situations in the region, where rape was used as a weapon of war. A general culture of violence against women in society also impacted violence against women in parliament. Perpetrators were primarily male parliamentary colleagues, from the same or opposing political parties. With regard to online abuse, 44 per cent of sexist attacks could be attributed to members of the public or anonymous perpetrators, 30 per cent of acts of intimidation were perpetrated by members of the public, in particular in the run up to elections, and 52 per cent of threats were made by citizens, militant groups, terrorist groups and, above all, anonymous perpetrators. Parliaments, as workplaces, were directly concerned: 83 per cent of acts of sexual harassment, 78 per cent of cases of sexist behaviour and 40 per cent of acts of physical violence against women parliamentarians in Africa took place in parliament. Other locations included electronic communication platforms, on the ground working in constituencies, and in the home.

Multiple discrimination resulted in higher incidence of violence. Women parliamentarians with disabilities, young women, unmarried women and women from minority groups, as well as those from the political opposition and those who spoke in support of women’s rights and equality, were targeted in particular. Reporting rates were low: victims were afraid to report violence. Only 27 per cent of women parliamentarians who had been slapped, pushed or hit, 7 per cent of those who had been sexually harassed, and 12 per cent of women parliamentary staff who had been psychologically harassed or bullied had reported it. Violence undermined the dignity and human rights of women parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and affected their psychological and physical health, as well as perpetuating gender inequalities, creating destabilizing, hostile, degrading, humiliating and abusive work environments, undermining women’s participation, visibility and influence in politics, and undermining the concept of a representative and inclusive parliament and a truly representative democracy.

Clear policies were needed inside parliaments to put an end to all violence against women. Counselling and support units should be made available and complaints mechanisms should be established that were completely confidential and “survivor friendly”. Sanctions must be imposed for perpetrators, and training should be provided to everyone working in parliament to ensure full understanding of what constituted violence against women. The IPU had published *Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament*. Parliaments must not allow violence against women to continue. Policies and mechanisms must be put in place to

rectify the problem. Parliaments must learn from each other and work together to put an end to the scourge of violence. Each parliament must evaluate the situation. The IPU could provide support for such evaluations in full confidentiality, to protect survivors and with no intention to blame or shame, but rather with the aim of seeking constructive solutions. The IPU could also assist with setting up mechanisms including peer-to-peer support, and awareness-raising mechanisms in parliaments.

Many African parliaments had already begun to take measures to address the problem. Sierra Leone had adopted a gender policy for public servants that condemned sexual harassment and provided specific examples to raise understanding. Uganda's Human Resource Policy Manual defined, prohibited and sanctioned sexual harassment inside and outside parliament, including at conferences. Complaints mechanisms had been established in Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. Respondents to the survey had reported that increasing the number of women in parliament and fostering solidarity among women had a positive impact. The involvement of male colleagues in the fight against gender-based violence was also imperative. Partnerships with civil society were also important. The IPU remained at the disposal of all Member Parliaments to provide support to address all forms of violence against women in parliament.

**The President of the Forum** said that although the results of the study were shocking, a full picture of the reality of the situation was the first step towards bringing about crucial change. Every effort must be made to guarantee a zero-tolerance approach to violence against women in parliament.

#### **Contribution to the work of the 143rd Assembly from a gender perspective** (FEM/32/5-Inf.1)

**The President of the Forum** said that the Forum was called on to discuss the draft resolution before the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, entitled *Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*. To do so, the Forum would split into two working groups. The first would consider *Gender-responsive and survivor-centred legislation to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*. The group would be chaired by Ms. H. Ramzi Fayez (Bahrain), and Ms. M. Baba Moussa Soumanou (Benin) would act as Rapporteur. The second group would discuss *Age and gender-sensitive strategies to empower and educate children to protect themselves and report online sexual exploitation*. The group would be chaired by Ms. V. Riotton (France), and Ms. M. Al Suwaidi (United Arab Emirates) would act as Rapporteur.

*It was so agreed.*

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands), co-Rapporteur of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, said that the draft resolution had been prepared in an intensive and comprehensive drafting process, in which the three co-rapporteurs had worked as a dedicated team. Some 80 proposed amendments to the draft had been received, which were testament to the interest in and dedication to the subject. Online child sexual abuse and exploitation was a cross-border crime. Legal loopholes that allowed perpetrators to remain unpunished must be eliminated. Many parliaments had expressed concern with regard to how to address such a vast and complex crime in a changing online world, where adults struggled to keep up-to-date with technologies and their use. Sharing experiences and best practices was key.

While young people outpaced adults in the use of online applications, they were inclined to learn by experimenting and making mistakes; adults were better placed to assess the dangers of given situations and to ensure that children were adequately supported and protected. When considering the gender dimension of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, it was important to know that figures showed that boys were equally as likely to fall victim to online sexual exploitation and abuse as girls, yet they generally felt more ashamed and struggled to come forward and speak up. In some cases, victims had committed suicide. The co-rapporteurs hoped that the resolution would provide a starting point for exchanges of good practices and information on how to draft laws and ensure support for victims, and on how to read the signs to identify occurrences of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

*The sitting rose at 12:10.*

(Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 14:45 with Ms. L. Vasylenko (Ukraine), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, in the Chair.*

**Panel discussion: *Strategies for gender-responsive law-making***

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** said that the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development had set out commitments for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in law and in practice. Yet legislation in many countries still discriminated against women. The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and revealed the fragility of measures implemented to combat them. Parliamentarians were key to ensuring that national laws guaranteed gender equality in practice. The panel discussion would allow participants to share experiences and good practices on three strategic areas: benefits and challenges to conducting gender-responsive legal reform; partnerships needed to conduct gender-responsive legal reform; and necessary mechanisms and capacities in parliament to mobilize for action.

Together with UN Women, the IPU had recently published a new *Handbook for parliamentarians on gender-responsive law making*. The longstanding partnership between the two organizations was crucial for supporting parliaments in accelerating action for gender equality.

**Launch of the *Handbook for parliamentarians on gender-responsive law making***

*A short video was shown, introducing the Handbook.*

*A video message from Ms. A. Regner, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women was shown to mark the launch of the Handbook, which recognized the persistence of discriminatory legislation and gaps in law. All parliamentarians must play a crucial role in bridging those gaps. The Handbook was intended to be of use to all parliamentarians wishing to take action in that critical area of law reform, which would be even more important in efforts to build back better in the post-COVID-19 recovery.*

**The Secretary General** said that, despite the tireless work of the Forum to mainstream gender into the work of the IPU, and the efforts of many gender champions across the globe, gender inequalities persisted everywhere, in many shapes and forms. The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated those inequalities. The launch of the Handbook was intended to promote more equal societies. Societies that were more equal were more resilient, more prosperous and more peaceful. To build back better, it was therefore necessary to build forward more equally. The task was immense; globally, women only enjoyed two-thirds of the legal rights of men. Many laws still failed to consider women as equals with men, such as with regard to rights to nationality, inheritance or divorce. Some laws also still failed to address the specific needs and realities of women and girls, such as protection from all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination. All parliamentarians should make every effort to stem the tide of violence against women, in particular against women politicians.

Law could play a corrective role; the evidence of the impact of positive legal measures on achieving gender parity in parliaments was clear. To achieve true equality and meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets by 2030, equality in the law must be at the centre of parliamentary priorities. The IPU and UN Women had therefore embarked on the preparation of the Handbook, which would support parliaments in their efforts to legislate in a gender-responsive manner. The Handbook offered a holistic and practical approach to achieve full equality in law by 2030. It built on existing commitments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the SDGs and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as realities on the ground from a multitude of contexts. It had been developed in consultation with parliamentarians from around the world.

Legislative reform through a gender lens required building alliances in and beyond parliament, between men and women, between majority and opposition, and between government, parliament and civil society. The Handbook stressed that passing legislation was not enough; many good laws were lagging behind in implementation. Parliamentarians had a key role in ensuring that laws were disseminated and the necessary human and financial resources directed towards

implementing them. The Handbook was intended to bridge gaps in that regard, and to guide the development of the necessary knowledge and skills. The IPU and UN Women were ready to support parliaments in putting the Handbook's guidance into practice, to chart the path to achieving equality at the national and international levels.

### Panel discussion

#### Strategic area 1: Gender-responsive legal reform, its benefits and related challenges

**Ms. H. Ramzi Fayez** (Bahrain), panellist, said that in Bahrain, legislative reforms had been conducted, taking a gender-responsive approach to ensure equality in all walks of life, and moving women from empowerment to progress and development. Gender-sensitive laws had been enacted, with the involvement of women parliamentarians, members of the Women's Supreme Council and women in the cabinet. The Women's Supreme Council played a key role in empowering women and making them part of all projects and programmes for Bahrain's development. It worked with the legislative to enact legislation that would promote the role of women in the labour force, and improve women's quality of life and standard of living, to make Bahrain a model for women's participation. Gender equality was enshrined in the Constitution of Bahrain. Women were protected by law against discrimination and unequal treatment. The impact of the Supreme Council's efforts to promote gender equality could be seen in legislation on a variety of issues, including the guarantee of equal pay for work of equal value and other laws that prohibited gender-based discrimination in the provision of social security, health care and benefits. Laws had also been enacted to protect women against domestic violence and to promote women's participation in society.

**Ms. M. Vasilevich** (Belarus) said that significant results had been achieved in bridging the gender gap in Belarus. Women were widely represented in public administration. Women accounted for 35 per cent of parliamentarians. Legislative measures to empower women and promote gender equality had begun some 25 years previously. In line with the Constitution of Belarus, women enjoyed equal opportunities to men in respect of education and labour, social, political, cultural and other spheres. The Labour Code prohibited discrimination on any grounds, including gender. To incorporate a gender perspective into State policy, multi-year programmes for gender equality had been adopted. Legislation required continuous improvement. Gaps persisted with regard to the protection of women against domestic violence. A draft law was therefore currently in preparation to bridge those gaps. Stereotypes regarding the role of women in housekeeping and childcare meant that women in Belarus spent twice as much time on those matters as men. The national plan for gender equality therefore also placed emphasis on the equal role in childcare for all parents.

**Ms. S. Rehman** (Pakistan) said that women parliamentarians had changed the discourse on equality in Pakistan. Pakistan's women had passed landmark laws that not only discouraged discrimination but also protected and empowered women. The late Benazir Bhutto had been the first female prime minister in the Muslim world. She had signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and subsequently overseen the enactment of national legislation for the promotion of women's rights. The enactment of laws must be followed up by gender-sensitive implementation, ensuring that sufficient resources were allocated. Two particularly significant laws in Pakistan were the Act on protection of women against harassment in the workplace, which was currently being amended to take account of new forms of discrimination, and the Benazir Income Support Programme, which set the standard for social transfers, empowering women heads of poor households to receive funding and start-up assistance.

The COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in a "shadow" epidemic of domestic violence. Much more must be done nationally and internationally to put in place not only legislation and a body of jurisprudence but also mechanisms for reporting and redress. The majority of abuse against women was perpetrated by either an intimate partner or someone known to the victim's family. That scourge must be addressed. Another important consideration was the impact of the digital age on women's lives. While the Internet had been democratized and access to information had been broadened exponentially, young girls were reporting high levels of online harassment, which constituted a new doorway into discrimination. Pakistan was revising its cybercrime laws and considering how those laws were being violated. Current and contemporary challenges posed clear and present dangers to women and must be addressed.

**Ms. N. Arpadarai** (Azerbaijan) said that global society was going through many changes, including economic transformation and changes in social models. Although patriarchy as a social model was being transformed, violence and discrimination against women persisted and must be eliminated. In Azerbaijan, equality of men and women before the law was enshrined in the Constitution, and family was protected by the State as a core element of society. The Constitution also guaranteed a set of rights that protected against domestic violence, including the right to life and the right to freedom of movement. Specific legislation and a plan of action had been adopted on the prevention of domestic violence. Domestic violence had, however, still not been defined as an offence under the Criminal Code. Education and economic empowerment for women were crucial; if women depended on men financially, violence and discrimination in the home could persist.

**Ms. S.Y. Al-Jufairi** (Qatar) said that women played an important role in public life in Qatar. Women held senior administrative and scientific positions and played a key role in Qatari society. In October 2021, women had been able to stand in municipal elections since 1999. Women had been allowed to participate in legislative elections in October 2021. Despite no women having been elected, she had been appointed to the Shura Council by the Emir. Qatari women had contributed to entrepreneurship and business, participated in the work of the United Nations, and played important roles in academia. The Qatar Foundation, a centre for science, technology, community and innovation, had been co-founded and was headed by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

**Ms. K. Slassi** (Morocco) said that Morocco had taken legislative measures, including through a constitutional reform, to enshrine the principle of equality of men and women before the law, and to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women were represented in political parties in Morocco. The gender dimension was written into several legislative enactments, including on issues such as nationality and the protection of the rights of migrant workers. Although significant progress had been made in increasing the number of women in parliament, more must be done to mainstream gender in legislation and achieve parity.

**Ms. C. Cano** (Panama) said that in Panama progress had been made with regard to women's rights and gender equality. In 2020, specific legislation had been adopted to define and prohibit political violence against women, and thereby enhance women's participation in politics. Legislation had also been enacted to set the parameters of women's participation in the workforce, which included specific provisions on the protection of women against discrimination, and to provide support for women survivors of domestic violence, including by granting them paid leave to enable them to attend counselling and rehabilitation and to follow up on any legal processes in which they were involved. The Act on equal opportunities for women prohibited all forms of discrimination against women and condemned all forms of violence against women. Laws had also been enacted prohibiting domestic violence and femicide.

## **Strategic area 2: Partnerships needed to conduct gender-responsive legal reform**

**Ms. P.A. Komarudin** (Indonesia), panellist, said that the Indonesian Parliament had established a caucus for women parliamentarians, which focused on advocacy to ensure at least 30 per cent women's participation in Indonesia's political parties and institutions. Capacity-building activities were also being undertaken to increase caucus members' political and legislative capacity. The caucus had engaged with civil society organizations, nongovernmental organizations, representatives of academia and the private sector to conduct programmes and activities to empower women. Interagency collaboration with regional parliaments' women's caucuses was a means of sharing experiences and mainstreaming gender equality in law. The caucus advocated for gender-responsive legislation through multistakeholder engagement and cooperation.

The Parliament of Indonesia was in the process of approving a bill for tackling sexual violence and related issues. The caucus created debate on the bill in and out of parliament and sparked active engagement and advocacy among civil society and academia, thereby enriching the legislative process. The caucus had garnered support from religious leaders and civil society organizations to advocate for the draft's inclusion on the legislative priority list, following a hiatus in 2020. The caucus also played an oversight role; a mechanism for scrutinizing laws and their implementation from a gender perspective had been developed. The mechanism would be used to identify gender gaps in legislation at the national and local levels. The caucus was ready to share its experiences and lessons learned with other parliaments around the world.



**Ms. E. Nyirasafari** (Rwanda), panellist, said that partnerships were important and necessary for gender-responsive legal reform. Gender-sensitive laws were a prerequisite for women's empowerment. Strong political will was needed, with a clear understanding of the importance of gender equality. In Rwanda, the President, who was a "He for She" global champion, was at the forefront of the fight for women's empowerment. The Constitution of Rwanda prohibited all forms of discrimination and guaranteed the equality of men and women before the law, requiring a minimum of 30 per cent women in all decision-making bodies. Currently, 60 per cent of Rwanda's parliamentarians were women, the Speaker of Parliament was a woman, and 50 per cent of government members were women. Rwanda's legislative machinery for women's empowerment constituted the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the National Women's Council, and the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians. Significant progress had been made through those mechanisms to develop an institutional framework that supported gender equality.

Legislation had been revised or amended, and in some cases laws repealed, to ensure gender sensitivity. As a result of those legislative revisions, inheritance rights had been granted to women, and nationality could be passed by Rwandan mothers to their children. Nationality could also be acquired by marriage, irrespective of whether the spouse with Rwandan nationality was male or female. Equality for spouses had been enshrined in law, granting women equal rights to men with regard to household management. The Criminal Code had also been revised to ensure equal punishment for men or women convicted of adultery. Legislation on land acquisition had been amended to grant land rights to women, who could now own land and use it as collateral against loans. Such comprehensive legal reform could not have been achieved without significant cooperation and the involvement of civil society. Much remained to be done, however, and traditional barriers and religious beliefs continued to hamper equality. Public awareness raising of women's rights was therefore essential, and partnerships between institutions would be the key to advancing the gender equality agenda.

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** invited participants to consider what needed to be done for gender equality policies to have impact and to give examples of parliamentary engagement with civil society and groups of women and girls.

**Ms. A. Habibou** (Niger) said that in Niger, a variety of commitments had been made to promote gender equality. The principle of equality of men and women before the law, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination were enshrined in the Constitution. Legislative amendments had allowed for women to transmit their nationality to their children. Quotas had been set to ensure that 25 per cent of elected parliamentarians were women. The Criminal Code prohibited certain types of violence against women, including female genital mutilation, rape and sexual harassment. However, significant gaps in legislation persisted. The Family Code had not been adopted for social, cultural and religious reasons. Legal pluralism constituted a serious impediment; there was no hierarchy of norms, and the legal systems contradicted each other. Women were therefore far from having equal rights, given the different perspectives of the different legal texts. While there was generally a positive trend in engaging children, in particular girls, in education, participation waned as children progressed through the education system. A law on cybercrime had been adopted.

**Ms. G. Karelova** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation had adopted a national strategy for action for women, the implementation of which, under the aegis of the Federal Council, involved international organizations, civil society, businesses and the private sector. Through the strategy, the Eurasian Women's Forum had been established, which held regular sessions attended by participants from around the world, including from a slew of international organizations. She expressed her gratitude to all of the women parliamentarians who had participated. An intersessional women's council had been set up, which constituted a demonstration of real partnership between the State, the private sector and civil society, to mobilize for women's empowerment. The council had launched projects for boosting women's participation in all aspects of life. Alongside those projects, efforts were being made to promote women's leadership. Educational programmes for young women in leadership had been set up. The success of such projects, and exchanges of experience and best practice in cooperation with others, had contributed to updating and revising legislation and renewing the strategy for action.

**Ms. A. Attalides** (Cyprus) said that introducing a gender perspective into participatory process required a change in power and influence in public policy, and the identification of the sources of inequalities. Women in Cyprus, being underrepresented in Government and Parliament, demanded public consultation on legislative proposals, to allow them to share their experience and expertise, express their views and concerns, and be actively involved in policy formulation. Partnerships would ensure that policies responded to the specific needs of women. Close collaboration between parliamentarians, State agencies and civil society was essential. Landmark legislation had been enacted on preventing and combating violence against women, including domestic violence. The legislation was intended to create a model, integrated framework to address the contemporary challenges faced by women, and included provisions for the protection and support of all victims and for assistance to women's organizations and services, to ensure effective cooperation.

**Ms. M.I. Valente** (Angola) said that the Parliament of Angola had created a group of women parliamentarians, with the aim of attaining 30 per cent representation in Parliament. Women were still severely underrepresented; one political party in Angola only had three women in its membership. Legislative developments were being made to protect women; legislation had been adopted to prohibit domestic violence, and to prevent and punish online violence against children. Male parliamentary colleagues had been engaged in the fight for women's equality, and after a lengthy process, a resolution had been passed on the need to incorporate a gender dimension into the State budget. With the support of a project funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, along with colleagues from Cabo Verde, the Parliament of Angola had organized workshops to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality, involving the ministers of finance and economy and planning. The new budget, which was still pending adoption, had been drafted to include gender indicators.

**Ms. N. Al Hamdi** (Oman) said that women were traditionally highly respected and valued in Omani society, and an annual "women's day" was celebrated. Omani women enjoyed equal rights to men and worked side-by-side with men in both the private and public sectors, with equal opportunities. Women's economic, social and political participation was considered beneficial for the whole of Omani society. Women held positions in government at the national and municipal levels. In Oman, women had enjoyed the right to vote and to stand for election since 1994. In 1997, the first four women parliamentarians had been elected. There were currently 17 women in Parliament. Women also played a significant role in diplomatic relations and held positions at the ministerial and vice-ministerial levels. The attainment of SDG 5 on women's empowerment was a priority, as was implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Oman was a party.

**Ms. M.N. Ulenge** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that Tanzania had its first female President, who was taking active measures to promote empowerment of women and girls. Legislative reforms were under way, and a programme had been put in place to encourage girls to return to school after pregnancy. The law on marriage was being revised to bridge gaps on child maintenance payments in cases of neglect by fathers, denial of fatherhood, and provision of support for step-children.

**Ms. I. Barakat** (Arab Parliament) said that women's equality was a prerequisite to sustainable development. Despite the progress made towards women's empowerment in many countries, women's affairs were still not included consistently on political agendas. As long as violence against women persisted there could be no equality. A legislative review was needed to take account of all mechanisms for preventing gender-based violence. The Handbook launched by the IPU and UN Women would provide invaluable guidance in that regard. Legislation alone was not sufficient. Implementation was the key to change. The Arab Parliament had kept women's empowerment high on its agenda and tangible steps were being taken to ensure progress in that regard. An Arab forum for women parliamentarians had been established, with the support of the IPU, to discuss all matters relating to women's rights.

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** said that 137 women in the world died each day as a result of gender-based violence, which was utterly unacceptable.

**Strategic area 3: Mechanisms and capacities for action in parliament**

**Ms. C. Mix** (Chile), panellist, said that women, who represented more than half of the world's population, faced constant inequality, both in everyday life and in political representation. Mechanisms had been established in Chile to address practical inequality in political participation. An historic constitutional reform process had been launched, in which a commission had been established, comprising an equal number of women and men, to rewrite the Constitution taking account of gender equality and women's empowerment. Chile's new Constitution would be the first in the world to be drafted with gender parity. The commission would pave the way for a reform of the composition of other government bodies. While parity laws on parliamentary representation remained pending, quotas remained in place, as a result of which there were now more than 50 female parliamentarians in the Chamber of Deputies, although women remained underrepresented in the Senate.

Women's representation was not merely a question of numbers. True equality must be judged on their substantial participation, their influence and the tangible effects of their participation on respect for the interests and rights of women. Consideration must be given to what a gender-sensitive parliament would look like in practice, to ensure that it played a relevant role in correcting inequalities and facilitating equal participation of men and women. The IPU's work to define gender-sensitive parliaments was particularly valuable. Every effort must be made to remove all barriers to women's participation in parliament, and set positive examples of women's inclusion for society as a whole. Despite the positive measures taken in Chile, much remained to be done. Measures must be taken to highlight and truly understand the inequalities that persisted, as the baseline for corrective measures to lead to gender equality.

**Ms. A. Shkrum** (Ukraine) said that in the 30-year history of Ukraine's independence, women's participation in parliament had increased from 2 per cent to 21 per cent. Although such an increase constituted good progress, much remained to be done to achieve parity. Over the course of those 30 years it had become clear that the Parliament of Ukraine had not been equipped for gender budgeting or scrutiny of legislation from a gender perspective. International scrutiny of Ukrainian legislation had brought to light the fact that there were around 100 high-level positions, such as generals in the military or drivers of Metro subway trains, which women were not permitted to hold. Legislative reform had therefore been necessary. A multiparty equal opportunities caucus had been set up for legislative scrutiny and reform. Men's involvement in the caucus, and in all discussions on gender equality, was crucial.

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** agreed that the support and advocacy of men was indeed essential to achieve gender equality.

**Ms. E. Abdullah** (Maldives) said that in the Maldives, out of 87 parliamentarians, only four were women, which meant that any work on gender issues must be done with a lot of networking and support from both within and outside Parliament. A standing committee on gender and human rights had been established in Parliament, through which legislation had been enacted on domestic violence, sexual harassment and gender equality. A quota had also been set for 30 per cent women's representation in local councils. The standing committee also scrutinized the annual budget from a gender perspective. The public could petition Parliament through the committee, on issues including child abuse, abuse in schools and abuse in State institutions. A national inquiry had been launched to investigate gaps in legislation and implementation, and how to rectify those. The committee thus made every effort to conduct legislative, budgeting and oversight functions from a gender perspective.

**Ms. T. Owatemi** (United Kingdom) said that there was cross-party commitment in the United Kingdom to ensuring gender parity in the membership of the House of Commons. In the House of Lords, however, seats could be inherited, which meant that many seats were guaranteed to men. Efforts were being made to change those traditional allocations, and ensure a more gender equal approach. Steps were being taken to ensure equal representation in parliamentary delegations, including to the IPU. An independent Women and Equalities Committee conducted parliamentary inquiries and held the Minister for Women and Equalities to account. Gaps in legislation were being identified and rectified, and work done across parties to tackle all forms of discrimination against women. A recently published gender pay gap inquiry had resulted in the formulation of recommendations that were being implemented. Yet much remained to be done to ensure equal participation of women in all spheres, including business, and that the gender equality agenda remained a priority and was promoted in all aspects of life.

**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that women's representation in Parliament in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had risen from 5 per cent to 25 per cent. While that constituted significant progress, it was still not sufficient. Women were encouraged to fight within their political parties to increase the number of women in Parliament. Women no longer wished to play a secondary role, but rather wished to make a substantive contribution to decision-making. In the forthcoming elections, women would be fighting for parity in the Senate. Women took leadership roles and chaired parliamentary standing committees. A committee for gender issues had been set up and every effort was being made to counter all forces that aimed to discourage women from participating in politics. Men were also encouraged to join the fight for gender equality; women could not reach parity alone. Significant difficulties persisted within political parties and in terms of public opinion and societal attitudes to women playing prominent roles in public life. The media was therefore being engaged in public awareness-raising and changing attitudes.

**Ms. F. Ilimi** (Algeria) said that gender equality was not only a women's issue; it was a pillar of democracy and good governance. In Algeria, efforts had been made to eliminate violence and harassment against women. Legislation had been enacted to prohibit all types of violence and harassment, including verbal abuse, at all levels, whether in the home, the workplace or public spaces. The Criminal Code had been amended to criminalize violence, with provision for increased sentences and fines. For harassment, prison sentences of a minimum of two months, combined with fines, were handed down. The legislative role of parliament was essential for tackling violence, and for raising public awareness. The revision of the Criminal Code in Algeria had helped to change societal attitudes, and had therefore contributed to changes in behaviour.

**Ms. E.L. Tongi** (Sierra Leone) said that in Sierra Leone, a quota had been set for a minimum 30 per cent women in parliament, which as yet had not been met. More women were, however, being encouraged to speak their mind in Parliament, and female parliamentarians were having a positive impact in bringing issues to their constituencies and encouraging public participation in politics. Given the history of conflict in Sierra Leone, politics had traditionally been considered dangerous; women and girls had been afraid to become involved. Changes were being made, especially through television and media interviews, which were making politics more accessible and encouraging women's participation. Using the "He for She" approach engaged men in the fight for equality, acknowledging the extent to which women's rights and participation had lagged behind. Equality could not be achieved without men's support. Women wanted to be involved; the IPU should continue to strive to engage women in politics around the world.

**Ms. S. Carvajal Isunza** (Mexico) said that the "Olimpia" Law against online abuse and violence had been adopted, named after a young Mexican woman who had been the victim of online abuse, and had subsequently become an activist, protesting for legislative reform to punish online violence and the use of digital images that violated the privacy of young people. Reforms had been undertaken to revise and strengthen sanctions against digital violence. Around 90 per cent of local authorities in Mexico had adopted legislation to that effect, to prohibit the proliferation of sexist stereotypes, incitement to violence against women and girls, dissemination of sexist hate speech, discriminatory language or gender biased opinions.

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** thanked all participants for their valuable contributions; the debate had provided many examples and much experience for further reflection.

### **Contribution to the work of the 143rd Assembly from a gender perspective** (continued)

#### **Reports of the working groups**

**Ms. M. Baba Moussa Soumanou** (Benin), Rapporteur for working group 1, said that the working group had considered *Gender-responsive and survivor-centred legislation to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*. The group had been chaired by Ms. H. Ramzi Fayez (Bahrain) and had been attended by 80 participants. Eighteen delegations had expressed their views and experiences on the topic. The working group had agreed that children represented the future of society and that they were particularly vulnerable and susceptible to online sexual abuse and

exploitation, a phenomenon which had increased exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic, since lockdown measures and restrictions imposed to counter the pandemic had led to children spending vastly increased amounts of time using online platforms and information communications technologies. All forms of sexual exploitation of children must be criminalized as a matter of urgency.

Legislation and policies must protect the rights and security of children, and must boost women's autonomy. Centres for child victims must be set up to provide physical and psychological rehabilitation. Measures must be taken to receive complaints and listen to children who were victims of online abuse, including through hotlines and online emergency contacts. Children must be included in decisions on measures to protect them. Such measures must take into account the different needs of children according to their age and gender. Specific measures should be put in place to protect young girls, who were the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Measures must take account of local cultural specificities.

Policies and measures to protect children against online sexual abuse and exploitation must include training and capacity-building for law enforcement to prevent and respond to such crimes. Cooperation between States must be encouraged, since online crimes knew no borders. Participants had also stressed the importance of strengthening the regulatory framework for online platforms, to involve them in the prevention and elimination of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Children must be educated in safe use of the Internet. All of those measures must be taken in the broader context of the elimination of inequalities between men and women, and the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence.

**Ms. M. Al Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates), Rapporteur for working group 2, said that the working group had discussed *Age and gender-sensitive strategies to empower and educate children to protect themselves and report online sexual exploitation*. The working group had been chaired by Ms. V. Riotton (France) and had been attended by 29 participants, 12 of whom had shared their views and good practices. Participants had discussed the need for strong legislation and accountability frameworks to combat online sexual exploitation and abuse of children, including the need to adhere to international standards, in particular the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. International treaties must be domesticated through the adoption of national legislation.

Legislation, however, was not enough. Awareness-raising and education were crucial among all concerned, including communities, families, children, teachers, doctors and legal and law enforcement professionals. All stakeholders must be engaged and work in a collaborative manner. Dedicated support services must be put in place and all those working with children must be trained to detect signs of abuse and address them in an age-appropriate and gender-sensitive manner. Any strategy to address online sexual abuse and exploitation must include sex education and digital literacy education. Beyond schools, all those involved with children must be equipped to act when and as appropriate to ensure that children could protect themselves and seek support when necessary. Awareness-raising campaigns must be targeted to all the relevant groups, to encourage reporting and model behaviour. Good examples must be set to encourage behaviour change not only among potential victims but also among potential perpetrators. The root causes of such exploitation and abuse must be addressed, through education, to prevent such crimes from occurring in future.

*The forum adopted the reports of the two working groups by acclamation.*

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** said that the two reports would be used to draft proposed amendments to the resolution for presentation to the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. That drafting process would take place in consultation with the chairs of the two working groups.

### **Elections to the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** (FEM/32/8-Inf.1)

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** said that the Forum of Women Parliamentarians was required to fill the vacant seat on the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians for one representative for the Asia-Pacific group. A candidature had been received from Ms. U. Chinbat (Mongolia). In the absence of any comments or objections, she would take it that the Forum wished to approve that candidature.

*It was so decided.*

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** said that the Forum was also called on to appoint the second Vice-President of the Bureau. The Bureau had met to consider two candidatures, and had approved the candidature of Ms. W.P. Andrade Muñoz (Ecuador). In the absence of any objections she took it that the Forum would approve that appointment.

*It was so decided.*

**Ms. W.P. Andrade Muñoz** said she wished to thank the Bureau and the Forum for the trust placed in her and expressed her commitment to working together towards the common goals of gender equality and equity, and to strive for gender parity in parliaments around the world.

#### **Venue and date of the 33rd session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians**

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** said that the 33rd session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians would take place immediately before the opening of the 144th IPU Assembly, which was due to take place in March 2022 in Nusa Dua, Indonesia.

**Ms. P.A. Komarudin** (Indonesia) said she wished to encourage all participants to attend the meeting in Nusa Dua. The theme of the 144th IPU Assembly would be related to inclusivity, which would also be the theme of Indonesia's presidency of the G20.

**The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians** thanked all participants for their contributions and declared the 32nd session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians closed.

*The sitting rose at 17:10.*

## Forum of Young Parliamentarians

### SITTING OF SATURDAY, 27 NOVEMBER

*The sitting was called to order at 14:45 with Ms. O. Rudenko (Ukraine) and Mr. M.A. Rakotomalala (Madagascar), Members of the Board, in the Chair.*

#### Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

#### Opening session

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that, as someone who had been elected at 25 years old, he understood the importance of having young people in parliament. Young people had the energy, commitment to change and sense of innovation that was essential in politics. They were critical to the success of democracy.

Abstention from politics was growing, especially among young people. Many young people felt that politicians did not represent them. They were becoming increasingly more divorced from the political system, which, in turn, made them more susceptible to supporting extremist ideas. Democracy, however, should be about bringing more people in and not pushing them away. The Forum of Young Parliamentarians must help parliaments achieve the trust of young people, inspiring them to go to debates, join political parties, fight for their ideas and vote.

Democracy had evolved in recent years. Today, new technologies played an important part in politics. Technologies had many advantages, including the ability to reach all people and provide a platform for feedback. However, they could also be dangerous, for instance, when used to spread hate speech. Politicians must find ways to navigate the challenges of social media without censorship.

Countries must consider how they could involve more young people in politics and achieve more youth representation in parliament. However, it was not enough for young people to simply be there. They must be given the chance to truly influence government decisions. The future that was being built was for the youth. Young people must have a say in defining the direction of their country.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) said that youth empowerment had not been adequately reflected in the new IPU Strategy 2022–2026. Youth empowerment had had a strategic objective of its own in the previous Strategy but had now been relegated to a subpoint. The approach disregarded the work and struggle of his predecessors. It was not the right way forward and must be altered. Young people were the future of the planet. The IPU could not approve a strategy that left young people behind.

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that there had been many opportunities to raise concerns regarding the Strategy. The Secretariat had sent the Strategy to all delegations for feedback but had not received comments regarding youth empowerment. The President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians was also a member of the Executive Committee but had not raised the issue there. The IPU had many objectives but had chosen to focus only on five in order to be clear about its mission. One of those was to promote inclusive and representative parliaments which was particularly relevant for youth. The text, however, was not the final version and could be amended.

**The Secretary General** said that the youth movement within the IPU had been underway for around 11 years. The Organization would continue giving young parliamentarians a platform to contribute to deliberations. There was a gross underrepresentation of young people in governing institutions with young people representing only 2.6 per cent of parliamentarians. It was therefore important to rejuvenate democracy, making youth empowerment part and parcel of the democratic process. Young people must have a seat at the table since they were disproportionately affected by the events going on in the world today, including the health crisis and climate change.

The IPU would be embarking on a new strategy for the period 2022–2026. Youth empowerment did not have a separate item in the Strategy but had instead been mainstreamed throughout. It meant that a youth perspective would be taken into account across all strategic objectives and decisions. The IPU hoped to capitalize on its recent achievements on youth participation. The *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign was gaining traction and would continue running. It was important to recruit young leaders to bring up the number of young people participating in decision-making processes.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) repeated his previous remarks. He appreciated that youth empowerment had been mainstreamed throughout the Strategy but highlighted the need to emphasize it much more explicitly. The President of the IPU had already agreed to make the necessary changes and the Secretary General should support him.

**Ms. J. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala** (South Africa) said that it was important to support young parliamentarians and encourage them to participate. However, there was a tendency to presume that young people knew all the answers on youth empowerment which was not always the case. It would be good if older parliamentarians could share their own insights too. There was a need for high-level officials, such as Speakers of Parliament, to report on the youth programme in their own parliaments. Young women should be given more opportunities to take up positions of strategic importance.

**The Secretary General** said that the Strategy had not yet been adopted and could therefore be tweaked as requested by Mr. Lechte. Members must feel comfortable with the Strategy and know that it belonged to them.

The remarks of Ms. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala were consistent with the new emphasis that the IPU would be placing on accountability. Indeed, the new Strategy stressed the importance of ensuring that parliaments implemented their commitments, including on youth empowerment. The *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament* campaign encouraged parliaments to introduce policy actions such as legislative frameworks, quotas, reserved seats, education and advocacy. Recommendations for action were also published in the biannual report on youth participation. Some countries had already taken positive steps. For example, the Parliament of Uganda, had recently elected a parliament that was overwhelmingly young thanks to clear laws and policies that created an enabling environment for youth participation.

He agreed on the need to recruit high-level officials into the youth movement. The importance of youth participation was consistently raised at meetings with Heads of State which had led to some positive impact. For example, the President of Uzbekistan had built a campaign on youth participation based on the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign.

The IPU had accumulated a great deal of knowledge on youth empowerment over the past ten years on which it hoped to build. It had identified many solutions that worked and would encourage countries to implement them. That said, he stressed that the solutions must come from young people, not the older generation. The contribution of youth people was particularly important on issues related to the digital revolution.

As the Chair of the Global Board of the International Gender Champions (IGC), the Secretary General was very committed to gender parity. The IPU itself had garnered a great deal of experience on gender over the past forty years, which could in turn be applied to the youth movement. It was not necessary to reinvent the wheel on youth.

**Ms. R.A. Barbarán-Reyes** (Peru) said that Peru had elected a high number of young parliamentarians in its most recent elections despite not having quotas in place. The election results were down to the political parties which had understood the importance of recruiting young people. The older generation was beginning to understand that a mix of experiences were needed for parliamentary work, including those of young people. The IPU should set up online youth forums allowing young parliamentarians from around the world to interact and exchange experiences. The forums should be led by young people.

**Mr. N. Al Alou** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Strategy must consider ways to protect young people and increase their participation in local political life. Youth migration was a massive problem with thousands of young people from Iraq, Syria and Lebanon currently stranded on the border between Poland and Belarus.



**The Secretary General** said that one of the strategic objectives of the Strategy was to promote inclusive and representative parliaments, which would be a good entry point for youth participation. In addition, the workplan for 2022 was replete with activities and programmes intended to empower youth. Young parliamentarians must be part of decision-making processes, helping to identify solutions to challenges facing young people today. However, it was not just about increasing youth participation in parliament but about delivering for young people as a whole, for instance, by increasing youth employment and educational opportunities. It was important to create an environment that did not require young people to risk their lives migrating from one country to another.

### Updates on youth participation

**The Chair** said that, over ten years ago, IPU Member Parliaments had adopted an ambitious resolution on youth participation. Since then, parliaments had gradually embraced the principles embedded therein and taken steps to open themselves up to young people. Despite progress, the level of youth representation remained low. Only 2.6 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide were under 30.

In 2021, the IPU had been paving the way for youth participation both globally and nationally. It had held the Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in April 2021. The conference had resulted in a successful outcome document that had informed the debate of the 142nd IPU Assembly on overcoming the pandemic and building a better tomorrow. Meetings of the Forum and its Board had also been held, taking the work on youth empowerment to the next level. Additional support for youth had been galvanized at the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament held in Vienna in September 2021.

The new *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign had been the flagship initiative of the year. The campaign had been launched at the Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in April 2021 as well as at the 142nd IPU Assembly and the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. It had been promoted on the International Day of Parliamentarism on 30 June, International Youth Day on 12 August, and International Democracy Day on 15 September. The campaign had already attracted the strong support and commitment of a myriad of actors across the world. As many as 555 changemakers had pledged to support youth participation in parliament, among them 20 Speakers of Parliament and 190 members of parliament. Many global leaders had also shown their support, including the Prime Minister of Liechtenstein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the President of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the President of the UN General Assembly. The campaign had been launched in 20 national parliaments, including Andorra, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Canada, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Montenegro, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Serbia, Thailand, Uruguay and Uzbekistan. Launch events had included conferences and workshops, plenary sessions with young people, video messages from Speakers, statements by young parliamentarians, press releases and promotional videos.

*A video was played on the I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament! campaign.*

**Ms. Z. Hilal** (IPU), Secretary of the Forum, said that the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* Campaign was about promoting youth participation in parliament. She asked delegates to join the campaign as a statement of their commitment to youth participation. There had not been any drastic improvements in youth participation in recent years despite many parliamentarians expressing support for the cause. Still only 2.6 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide were below 30. The solution was to take action. Anyone who signed up to the campaign would take a pledge committing to taking action in a number of key areas.

The first pledge was to promote youth quotas. Many young people faced barriers that prevented them from running for office or being elected, including barriers related to culture, discrimination, lack of access to funding, and personal life. Youth quotas broke down those barriers and opened up opportunities for young people. According to IPU data, only nine countries had reserved seats or legislated youth quotas in place. The figure had remained unchanged since 2016 which was very worrying. Quotas inside political parties were more common, but the aim was to have quotas at the legal level.

The second pledge was to align the age of eligibility to run for office with the voting age. The IPU was of the view that someone who was old enough to vote was old enough to run for office. Yet, 69 per cent of countries worldwide imposed a waiting time between voting age and age of eligibility. Indeed, the average age to run was 23.6 years old while the voting age stood almost universally at 18.

The third pledge was to support youth channels in parliament, including committees, caucuses, networks or forums. Such channels were important given their role in defending young people inside parliaments. Today, only 39 per cent of parliaments had a committee that referred specifically to youth in its mandate. Only 16 per cent of parliaments had a forum or network of young parliamentarians and only 21 per cent of parliaments had youth caucuses. Those who signed up to the campaign could pledge to improve the situation, for instance, by setting up a forum of young parliamentarians of their own.

The fourth pledge was to empower young parliamentarians. Young parliamentarians, once elected, needed support in building up their capacities and knowledge. Speakers of Parliament were requested to organize trainings for young parliamentarians thus giving them the opportunity to have an influence and be heard. In addition, the former President of the Board of Young Parliamentarians had asked the IPU to organize an “empowerment series” for young parliamentarians, including online training courses.

The fifth pledge was to mentor young people aspiring for political office. Parliamentarians should get in touch with schools, universities and other youth organizations to spend time with young people. The aim was to show young people that being a politician was possible for them. Parliamentarians could, for instance, bring young people into their offices or take them on their electoral campaigns.

The final pledge was to advocate for youth participation by promoting the campaign in every country and on every continent. Delegates should encourage as many parliamentarians as possible, regardless of gender or age, to join the campaign.

The campaign had already been launched by several parliaments, including the Parliaments of Austria, Ecuador, Bahrain, Uruguay and Belarus as well as by some international organizations such as the NDI, the Kofi Annan Foundation and UNDP. Once again, she urged delegates to join the campaign.

**The Chair** said that the IPU would be initiating some new and exciting opportunities in 2022. For instance, it would be launching a flagship “empowerment series” made up of online briefings, workshops, and training courses to support young parliamentarians. It would also be holding the next Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians which would focus on youth for climate action. He encouraged delegates to support those initiatives.

**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that many countries did not have the legislation in place to facilitate youth participation. Parliamentarians must use their powers to put in place the right laws. It was not just a question of increasing youth participation but of increasing the effectiveness of that participation. Young parliamentarians must be able to address the real-life problems affecting young people today. In many countries, the views of young parliamentarians were not taken into consideration.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo had a youth forum in the National Assembly and hoped to set one up in the Senate. The proportion of young people in the Senate was high at 35 per cent. However, the global number (2.6%) was unacceptable. Political parties must include young people on their electoral lists. IPU Members should not come to meetings to complain but to encourage each other to act. The *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign should be launched in all parliaments.

**Ms. K. Tsilosani** (Georgia) said that more than 50 per cent of the Georgian Parliament was made up of young parliamentarians, including the Speaker. Similarly, a high number of young people were participating in local elections with many taking up high-level positions. Quotas were important to support youth participation, but there was also a need to promote equal opportunities for all. Some cultures and traditions did not see the value of youth participation. Raising awareness about the importance of youth in policy and lawmaking was therefore necessary. The *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign combined with the new IPU Strategy were likely to bring tangible results.

**Mr. V. Tsvangirai** (Zimbabwe) said that Zimbabwe had added ten additional seats to those reserved for youth in parliament. It had put a young woman in charge of the committee on climate and officially inaugurated a parliamentary youth caucus made up of junior parliamentarians, junior councillors and junior mayors. The parliamentary youth caucus of Zimbabwe wished to extend an invitation of engagement to other parliamentary youth caucuses worldwide.

**Ms. M. Grisoul** (Monaco) said that Monaco had made many advancements on youth participation. She, as a young parliamentarian, was the vice-president of her political party. The country had set up a national youth council made up of 12 young people, 9 of whom were female. The council allowed young people between the ages of 15 and 18 years to make proposals to parliament on issues affecting them, such as ecology, education, and school bursaries. The Parliament of Monaco consisted of 24 parliamentarians, 6 of which were under 35. More and more young people were interested in politics in Monaco. Their interest was largely down to the fact that all parliamentary debates were broadcast on television and on social networks.

**Mr. E.L. Barri Wanji** (South Sudan) said that South Sudan had 30 members of parliament who were below the age of 30. More emphasis should be placed on the role of governments and political parties in promoting youth participation. Young people must be treated like living organisms. They must be nourished and nurtured until they reached the highest levels of attainment. Education should be at the top of the agenda. Currently, 260 million children worldwide were out of school, including 100 million children in Africa. If young people did not have the right skillsets, attitudes and knowledge, they would not be able to hold parliamentary positions even if countries advocated for more youth in political spaces.

**Mr. R.M.M. Iqbal** (Pakistan) commended the IPU for working to enhance youth participation in parliaments. Pakistan had set up a forum for young parliamentarians in 2003. The forum had a secretariat and a board made up of six members, including the President and the Secretary General. The board was directly elected. It was also bipartisan with both sides of Parliament getting three members each. So far, the forum had taken many initiatives on women and youth, including the establishment of the Transgender Persons Act. Two of the four provinces would use youth quotas in the upcoming local government elections. He supported the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign. Youth brought enthusiasm and new ideas, were open to change and understood contemporary issues.

**Ms. R. Campain** (Ecuador) said that 54 per cent of parliamentarians in Ecuador were young people under the age of 45. Young people were thus guaranteed to take part in decision-making. Ecuador had reformed its democracy law to create more space for young people.

It was very important to replicate examples of positive practices and put words into action. Young parliamentarians should go directly to parliament and make the necessary youth reforms themselves. She supported the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* Campaign.

**Mr. D.L. Keorapetse** (Botswana) said that Botswana was the oldest democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa but still had many weaknesses. The Parliament of Botswana was not an inclusive parliament. Only 10 per cent of parliamentarians were women and only 10 per cent were young people under 40. Reserved seats for women or youth had not been introduced. There were, however, six partisan seats, four of which had gone to women, including one young woman in her late thirties. The voting age in Botswana was 18 years. He asked the Forum for its opinion about reducing the voting age to 16. Some political parties in Botswana allowed people to vote on internal issues at 16 despite needing to be 18 to vote in elections. He asked how the IPU could assist parliaments in setting up youth forums. Young people must stand up for their rights and aggressively demand their rightful place.

**Mr. M.A. Bouchouit** (Algeria) said that young people represented 34 per cent of parliamentarians in Algeria. The country had managed to elect a high number of young parliamentarians thanks to an electoral law which obliged all political parties to ensure that 50 per cent of their candidates were young people. It was important to support the many young people worldwide who were oppressed, persecuted and unable to participate, as was the case for many young Palestinians.

**Mr. W. Soto Palacios** (Peru) said that young people had a very important role to play and must be given the opportunity to represent their country in parliament. Once elected, young parliamentarians should commit to drafting laws that protected the interests of voters. There was also a need to strengthen the role of political parties in promoting youth participation. Commitments must go beyond words and be turned into action.

**Ms. N. Arpadarai** (Azerbaijan) said that many young people had participated in the recent elections held in Azerbaijan. She supported the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign to increase youth participation in all sectors but was sceptical about quotas. Education and knowledge were key. Society must grow its own young leaders. She believed in the power of communication as a way of improving youth participation. Young people, especially young women, faced many of the same challenges when trying to get into politics.

**Ms. J. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala** (South Africa) said that young people under 45 constituted 30 per cent of the total number of parliamentarians in South Africa. The youngest parliamentarian was 21 years old and was the president of the South African Youth Congress. Only four of the 47 parliamentary committees were chaired by young people under 45. Male parliamentarians outnumbered their female counterparts in every age group. South Africa did not have concessional or legislated youth quotas. Under its Constitution, any person who was eligible to vote during national or local elections was eligible to be a member of parliament. The onus lay with political parties to nominate young people as candidates. It was important to address the issue of youth apathy and get more young people interested in voting.

**Ms. J.C. Ng'andwe** (Zambia) said that the average age of the 13th National Assembly of Zambia was 48 which remained unchanged since the 12th National Assembly. However, the 13th National Assembly had seen a marginal increase in youth representation, moving from 2 per cent to 4 per cent. The level of youth representation was low given that young people aged 15 to 35 constituted 36.7 per cent of the population.

She wished to suggest a number of solutions. First, young parliamentarians should be given a platform to exchange ideas and knowledge. Second, there was need to establish a parliamentary caucus on children. Third, it was critical to provide support to young parliamentarians.

Zambia planned to establish a youth caucus so that young people could influence policies and laws. She supported the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* Campaign.

**Mr. M. Bouva** (Suriname), former President of the Board of the Forum, thanked the IPU President and the Forum for the support he had received during his presidency. His presidency had come at a very challenging time with work having to be undertaken both in person and online. The Forum had, however, made the most of the time and produced a number of deliverables, including the report on youth participation, proposals for the new IPU Strategy and the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign.

Capacity building must be at the centre of all youth empowerment work. Young parliamentarians needed the knowledge and skills to address issues such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2030 Agenda. Education was another important consideration. Many young people were struggling with online classes with some unable to get hold of a computer or internet connection. Other problems faced by young people included food insecurity, unemployment and health issues.

Young parliamentarians should empower each other on the above issues. There must also be sufficient budget available for youth empowerment work. He encouraged delegates to support the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* Campaign.

**Mr. A. Zhupanyn** (Ukraine) said that the Parliament of Ukraine was the second youngest parliament in the world. Approximately 12 per cent of parliamentarians were under 34 while 58.4 per cent of parliamentarians were under 45.

Young parliamentarians tended to encounter three obstacles in their work. First, people and voters often believed that young parliamentarians lacked expertise. Second, people and voters tended not to trust young people. Third, young parliamentarians received little or no support. That said, it made sense for young people to enter politics. Parliaments needed young people because they brought new ideas and passion. He supported the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign.

**Ms. T. Owatemi** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom had 21 members of parliament under 30 and 109 members of parliament under 40. The youngest member of parliament was 23 years old. Young people had brought compassion and intersectional values to parliament as well as more diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity.

The United Kingdom had always been committed to improving youth engagement. There was a dedicated youth parliament for people between the ages of 11 and 18. Young people also got the opportunity to shadow local cabinet members and learn about different portfolios. In certain areas, a young mayor was elected who had a budget to promote youth activities. There were also youth police and crime commissioners who helped to identify solutions tailored to youth.

The mandate of a young parliamentarian was to bridge the intergenerational gap. They must lead the charge on delivering innovative policy solutions to issues affecting both younger and older generations.

**Mr. A. Merei** (Syrian Arab Republic) agreed with Mr. Zhupanyn regarding the obstacles facing young people. Syria hoped to bring more young people into parliament but was impeded by the many security challenges facing the country. The role of the IPU was not only about encouraging countries to increase youth participation. It was also about creating a better working environment to attract more young people.

**Mr. R. Zare** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that young people were the driving force of change and transformation. History showed that young people were behind many scientific, cultural, political and economic developments. Youth must therefore be trained and mobilized so that they could play an active role in society.

It was not possible to establish democratic foundations without the active participation of young people. Increasing civic and political youth participation was crucial to building inclusive political systems and accountable governments, promoting good governance, and ensuring the survival of democratic institutions. It was particularly important to ensure the participation of young people in parliamentary elections and to offer them work experience in democratic institutions.

In Iran, the younger generation had played a significant role in scientific and economic innovation. Young people from various ethnicities and religions comprised over one third of the Iranian Parliament. Investing in the development of young people's talents, setting a good example for them, making them aware of the importance of their position and power were key to promoting youth participation.

Parliaments must define a roadmap on youth empowerment and create strong incentives for young people to participate.

### Contributions to the work of the 143rd Assembly

**The Chair** said that the theme of the General Debate was *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*. He invited a few delegates to share their contributions to the debate which should include a youth perspective.

**Mr. H. Bouzekri** (Algeria) commended the IPU for mainstreaming the perspectives of young people into its activities. The world was in need of renewal. Young people would bring new perspectives and ways of thinking.

The world should move away from conflicts and hatred towards cooperation. International cooperation was needed to foster peace and stability, build institutions that respected human rights, and develop effective technologies.

Young people must come together to find solutions to problems, including through the use of digitalization and information and communication technology (ICT). They must be trusted to guide the world into a new phase of humanity.

**Mr. R.M.M. Iqbal** (Pakistan) said that democracy must not be self-contradictory or have double standards. Often, leaders used the label of democracy but became dictators. Democracy would lose its credibility if leaders continued to act in such a way. Democracy should continue to evolve, becoming more and more representative, in order to retain the trust of the people.

A delicate balance must be struck to address the challenges of social media. People must have the liberty to use social media as a political platform without being able to spread hate speech or fake news. Many leaders try to protect themselves from social media criticism. Doing so nullified the principles of democracy. Democracy was not democracy if it did not listen to the people.

**The Chair** said that a resolution entitled *Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse* was being considered at the current Assembly. Mr. Lechte (Germany) had been appointed rapporteur of the Forum to provide a youth overview report on the theme of the resolution. He invited Mr. Lechte to present the report.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) read out the youth overview report. Digitalization brought many advantages but also many challenges. As technology advanced, new forms of crime emerged as well. One alarming trend was the ever-increasing number of online child sexual exploitation cases. Perpetrators were using the World Wide Web anonymously to contact children, share images of abuse, hide their identities and profile while even encouraging and inspiring each other to commit further crimes. Yet, behind every image, video or screen was a real-life child victim being sexually exploited. The crimes harmed children not only physically but also emotionally, often leaving scars for a lifetime. The ability to recycle those materials on the internet meant children could be re-victimized millions of times.

Online child sexual exploitation came in many forms, but perpetrators tended to use four main methods: online child sexual abuse material, grooming of children for sexual purposes, live-streaming sexual abuse of children and sextortion (coercing and blackmailing children for sexual purposes). There were also four key dimensions: production, distribution, purchase and possession of such materials. Tailored measures on all four dimensions would have to be undertaken to combat online child sexual exploitation effectively and efficiently. It was therefore necessary to acknowledge the demand and supply side of content containing sexually exploited children. States must take action by adopting legislation, raising awareness and using national and international law enforcement agencies.

The Forum of Young Parliamentarians wished to: (1) express its alarm at the extent, cruelty and long-term physical and emotional effects on child victims who had been sexually exploited; (2) condemn all forms of online child sexual exploitation; (3) note the cross-border nature of online child sexual exploitation in the production, distribution, purchase and possession of such materials; (4) acknowledge and reaffirm the necessity of combatting online child sexual exploitation in all its forms and on all levels in order to protect children; (5) recognize the nature of the self-reinforcing supply and demand side of the online child sexual exploitation industry; and (6) support legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation.

The Forum of Young Parliamentarians therefore: (1) highlighted the need to fight online child sexual exploitation firmly and globally in order to better protect children; (2) called upon States to introduce legislation to combat online child sexual exploitation; (3) advocated for stronger and more harmonious legal frameworks to combat online child sexual exploitation; (4) encouraged States to take the initiative in combating online child sexual exploitation in all its dimensions (production, distribution, purchase and possession); (5) called upon Member Parliaments to legislate on the ways social media networks operated, obliging them to increase efforts to detect and delete online child sexual exploitation content immediately; (6) recommended that States joined the INHOPE association which coordinated the quick collection of evidence using the international child sexual exploitation database at Interpol; (7) reminded Member Parliaments to include media skills in the school curriculum and raise awareness about the personal use of data; (8) recommended that Member Parliaments took prevention and sensitization measures to raise awareness among children, adolescents, parents and teachers on sexual exploitation of children; (9) emphasized the importance of victim care for children who had been sexually exploited; and (10) encouraged partnerships between States, the technology industry and United Nations agencies to tackle the crime more effectively.

It was vital to focus not only on the perpetrators but also on the victims. The resolution should take a holistic approach that included all aspects of online child sexual exploitation.

**Ms. Kang Sunwoo** (Republic of Korea) said that the pandemic had accelerated online activities, leading to an increased interest in the metaverse. A metaverse was an online space consisting of physical and virtual reality which allowed users to bring their everyday lives online. The primary users of metaverse platforms were teenage girls.

The metaverse was not immune from sexual crimes. Perpetrators had expanded their reach to virtual spaces thanks to the rapid evolution of technologies. However, incidents of online sexual violence, including those on the metaverse, remained largely uncovered by legislation in many parts of the world. It was vital to strengthen statutory punishment and provide substantive support to victims but also to come up with preventive measures, such as enhancing the responsibility of internet service providers. She called on delegates to join forces on the issue so that every child could live a safe life free from sexual exploitation and abuse.

**Mr. M. Almheri** (United Arab Emirates) said that the United Arab Emirates had undertaken many efforts to protect children and adolescents from online violence. It had signed up to various international and regional agreements, including the Convention on the Protection of Children from Cybercrime, and enacted a number of national laws. In addition, the country had mobilized more than 450 religious leaders to work together to protect societies, especially children, from cyber risks. Other measures included hosting the second Webprotect World Summit in 2015 and being appointed by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to lead the international committee on child online protection in 2017. A number of policies were in place to promote wellbeing online, including a code of conduct for citizens and a platform allowing families to check the content of video games before they were put to market. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government had launched the Emirates Youth Opportunities platform, offering young people access to different educational programmes and technologies.

**Q&A session on the topic: *Forums of young parliamentarians: A success story?***

**The Chair** said that an increasing number of parliaments were setting up forums of young parliamentarians. IPU research showed that forums existed in around 16 per cent of parliaments. The forums focused on a range of issues, such as networking and capacity-building, coordination of parliamentary action on youth issues, and engagement of young parliamentarians with civil society. The Q&A session sought to inspire young parliamentarians to share their experiences and best practices regarding the establishment, functioning and impact of forums of young parliamentarians in their respective parliaments. The session would start with reflections by a panel followed by comments from the floor.

**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), panellist, said that the Democratic Republic of the Congo had set up a youth forum within the National Assembly. The youth forum focused on promoting youth participation in parliament and in other institutions. It also dealt with youth issues generally. The African Union actively encouraged African countries to create youth forums as well as to send young parliamentarians to participate in regional summits. Parliaments around the world must do more to create platforms for young people. Holding conferences to promote the youth agenda was also important.

Young parliamentarians were in parliament not only for themselves but also for the millions of other young people in society. As much as 60 per cent of the population of Africa was made up of young people many of whom did not have a job or were vulnerable to being recruited by terrorists or armed groups. Young parliamentarians must work to improve conditions for youth.

Young people must be able to make their voices heard without discrimination. They must have an influence in decision-making. They must participate in debates and help to draft laws, particularly on youth participation. Without laws, it was very difficult to boost the participation of young people in politics.

The fight for greater youth participation must start from within political parties. Indeed, it was at the level of the political parties that young people were first recruited to parliament. Political parties should introduce rules assigning a certain percentage of places on their electoral lists to young people.

A conflict of generations existed where older people did not trust or believe in young parliamentarians. In her case, her older colleagues rarely listened to her or respected her ability as a young female leader. She would, however, continue to work with confidence regardless of her age. Young people would get to where they needed to be if they just believed in themselves and pushed hard enough.

Young parliamentarians must do everything they could to be quality members of parliament. Quality was more important than numbers. The older generation would be reluctant to bring more youth into parliament if the current young members of parliament were ineffective. It was also through quality engagement that young parliamentarians could be role models for other young people, inspiring them to become parliamentarians one day themselves. Training for young parliamentarians was needed to help them participate effectively at the highest level.

**Mr. K.I. Tukura** (Nigeria), President of the Young Parliamentarians Forum of Nigeria, panellist, highlighted the importance of setting up youth forums in parliament. Young parliamentarians must convince their colleagues, young and old, of the value and relevance of having youth in parliament.

Education was key to delivering quality in parliament. Education would enable young parliamentarians to speak with authority and mastery. The older generation would have no choice but to listen if young people were able to speak with authority.

It was important to sustain momentum once a youth forum had been inaugurated. The forum must continue engaging with young people. It must continue making youth voices heard. It must continue advocating for young people's education and continue widening the space for young people to be in governance.

The Young Parliamentarians Forum of Nigeria had been established in 2016 and had so far had many successes. It had recently sponsored a bill obliging the President to consider young people when making appointments. The bill gave young people a better chance of securing positions of leadership. A mentorship programme had also been launched under which each member of the Forum took on a young mentee with a view to preparing them for the future. Mentees shadowed members as they undertook their legislative agenda, political activities and constituency engagements.

The Forum had also become a rallying point for youth-oriented activities. For example, in 2020, it had organized a roundtable, attended by the Speakers of Parliament and the Vice-President of the Republic, to discuss developments related to a youth-led uprising taking place in the country. It had also held a conference with various youth groups where young people could voice their views.

**Mr. M.A. Rakotomalala** (Madagascar), panellist, said that the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of Madagascar had been set up during the previous parliamentary term (2014-2019) and had been inspired by the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU. The Forum had been established because young people made up the majority of the population and therefore had to play an essential role in the country's socioeconomic development. The objective of the Forum was to positively influence the lives of other young people, helping them become competent, active, united and thriving citizens. It was also about including more young people in decision-making processes, particularly on issues affecting them. The Forum of Young Parliamentarians of Madagascar had helped raise awareness about the need for youth participation and continued to do so at different events, including seminars, workshops and festivals. Those efforts had helped improve perceptions about youth and had led to more young people becoming interested in public affairs. One particularly successful outcome was a meeting held in Antananarivo for young parliamentarians from the French-speaking world where participants had been able to make connections and exchange experiences. The Forum had lasted thanks to the appointment of an administrative secretary.

**Mr. E.L. Barri Wanji** (South Sudan) said that his country was currently in a transition period operating under a peace agreement after Parliament had been dissolved and then reconstituted. Young parliamentarians had attempted to form a youth caucus but had hit a stumbling block due to partisan issues. The ruling party had a majority in parliament but very few young people in its ranks. The opposition had a minority in parliament but many young people in its ranks. Problems had arisen in deciding the leadership of the caucus. The opposition had pushed for the leadership to go to them given it had a higher number of young parliamentarians. However, the ruling party had refused, arguing that the government should lead in line with the recent peace agreement. The issue remained unresolved. He asked the panellists to clarify how they had managed to work together across party lines to form a youth caucus in their parliaments. He was open to receiving assistance from other countries.

**Mr. K.I. Tukura** (Nigeria), President of the Young Parliamentarians Forum of Nigeria, panellist, said that his country had held an election to elect the chair of the Forum with candidates from different political parties. He advised Mr. Barri Wanji to pursue continuous engagement. If he was able to prove relevance, then opposition parties would have no choice but to take notice. Dialogue was also very important. Mr. Barri Wanji might wish to lobby parliamentarians informally with a view to resolving the matter. It might also be helpful to introduce a peer review process. Countries that had gone far in the formation of a young parliamentarians' forum could mentor other countries that were just starting out.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) asked the panellists whether they received funding to run a forum of young parliamentarians. They should clarify whether the older generation had voiced objections to introducing such a group. In Germany, groups for parliamentarians under 40 already existed within the political parties, making it difficult to set up a group for the parliament as a whole.



**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), panellist, said that it was essential to consider the financial aspect of the forum before setting one up. Her country allocated funding to the youth forum in the annual budget of the parliament. She encouraged other countries to do the same. There was a vital need to make national resources available for the activities of the forum rather than counting on external partners such as UNDP.

**Ms. C.I. López Castro** (Mexico) expressed her satisfaction that more and more countries were approving youth quotas. Mexico had made youth quotas mandatory at the local and federal levels but did not have a network for young parliamentarians in place. She would try to promote a youth network in her parliament and encouraged other countries to do the same. It would then be possible to report back to the IPU with the results of those efforts. Networks for young parliamentarians must exist in every parliament of the world.

**Ms. J. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala** (South Africa), adding to the comments made by Mr. Barri Wanji, said that multiparty democracies were becoming more widespread. For instance, South Africa had recently found itself in a multiparty coalition. She asked the panellists to clarify how parliaments could function effectively when multiple parties with differing policies and approaches were involved.

South Africa did not have a forum of young parliamentarians as such. However, it did have youth caucuses which sat once a year during “youth month” (June). Young people from all the different provinces were invited to attend the caucuses where they could raise youth-related issues and even chair meetings.

It was important to form intergenerational partnerships in parliament. People of different ages must come together to share ideas and experiences with the view to supporting young parliamentarians in the exercise of their mandate. Mentorship programmes were a good way to foster cooperative relationships between younger and more experienced parliamentarians. They could be used in parliament but also in the wider world, for instance, in entrepreneurship.

In South Africa, the term “youth” was generally used to describe people aged between 18 and 35. In the IPU, it included people up to the age of 45. However, using the term “youth” for a person who was 45 years old might not be accurate. She preferred to describe them as “younger” people. The Forum should consider changing its phrasing to better encapsulate the definition of a young person.

It was important to introduce legislated youth quotas, reserved seats and party quotas as a means of increasing the number of young parliamentarians. The most effective political systems helped to reduce the barriers that young people faced in getting nominated and elected. Aligning the age of candidacy with the minimum voting age would also prove helpful. Countries might wish to consider mandatory voting as a way of educating young people about the importance of their participation in politics and thus of combatting youth apathy. There was a need to establish mechanisms for young parliamentarians, such as caucuses, that would champion youth issues and ensure a youth-oriented lens in all government policies and programmes. Young people must not be reduced to members of parliament alone but instead considered as a wider social group.

**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), panellist, said that the African Youth Charter was very clear that people aged between 18 and 35 were considered to be youth. Most African countries had ratified the Charter and should therefore respect it. That said, many political parties considered youth to be people under the age of 45. Without quotas, it would be difficult to get young people into parliament. Young parliamentarians from South Sudan should try to move beyond political differences and unite over issues common to all young people.

**Mr. V. Tsvangirai** (Zimbabwe) said that a youth caucus had recently been inaugurated in his country but was still in the early stages of development. Differences between political parties were often the reason why youth caucuses were not implemented. As a result, his parliament had separated the powers of its caucus between the different political parties. Civic organizations and youth groups were involved in the caucus. Junior parliamentarians, counsellors and mayors also took part. The juniors were the ones bringing issues to the caucus while the parliamentarians listened. He asked the panellists how they went about engaging with other youth caucuses in their region or internationally.

**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), panellist, said that she was willing to set up a network of youth caucuses in Africa where young parliamentarians could share experiences and support each other.

**Mr. K.I. Tukura** (Nigeria), President of the Young Parliamentarians Forum of Nigeria, panellist, encouraged Mr. Tsvangirai to reach out to the chairs of other forums of young parliamentarians at the IPU.

**Ms. C.I. López Castro** (Mexico) said that she would be willing to add Mr. Tsvangirai to the group chat of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU.

### **Preparations for the 144th Assembly (March 2022)**

**The Chair** said that two resolutions would be considered at the next Assembly: (1) *Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace*, and (2) *Leveraging Information and Communication Technology as an enabler for the education sector, including in times of pandemic*. Pursuant to its Rules, the Forum must appoint rapporteurs to prepare a youth overview report that integrated a youth perspective into the draft resolutions. The Board of the Forum had decided to nominate Mr. M.A. Rakotomalala (Madagascar) and Mr. P.P. Kemper Thiede (Paraguay) as co-Rapporteurs.

*The nominations were approved.*

### **Any other business**

**The Chair** said that the new IPU Strategy 2022–2026 would be finalized at the present Assembly. It had been designed to anticipate how the global context would evolve over the next five years and position the IPU in a way that it could best respond. He invited the consultant responsible for overseeing the Strategy to provide some insights.

**Ms. F. Martonffy** (IPU Consultant) said that the process for reviewing the IPU Strategy had started one year previously with an assessment of the impact made by the IPU during the strategic period 2017-2021. Members had been able to provide their inputs in consultations. It had been the widest ever consultation process in the history of the IPU with 900 participants from 107 countries taking part via surveys, focus groups or interviews. The feedback received had led to the elaboration of several strategic models. The Executive Committee had chosen and refined one of those models which had later been sense checked and adjusted accordingly by the Secretariat. The Sub-Committee on Finance had then created the budget for the following year. Lastly, the Executive Committee had voted to approve the Strategy and recommend it for adoption to the Governing Council.

The Strategy was based on five strategic objectives. The first strategic objective was about building effective and empowered parliaments. It included building strong institutions, defending the human rights of parliamentarians, providing institutional and technical support, and helping at the national level with the implementation of global agreements. Some more current issues, such as fighting disinformation, would also fall under the first strategic objective to which youth could greatly contribute. The second strategic objective was about promoting inclusive and representative parliaments. It would build on the strong track record that the IPU had on gender and youth by expanding its scope to include more marginalized and vulnerable populations. The idea was to increase access to parliaments for all. The third strategic objective was about supporting resilient and innovative parliaments. The COVID-19 crisis had shown how important it was for parliaments to be able to adapt and transform in the face of shocks. It was also important for parliaments to be forward-looking, future-focused and ready to incorporate the latest developments in science and technology. Young people would have an important role in terms of innovation. The fourth strategic objective was about catalysing collective parliamentary action. It would involve organizing events to foster dialogue and cooperation between parliaments worldwide. The fifth strategic objective was about strengthening the accountability of the IPU. Accountability was needed on two levels: in the Secretariat and among Members. The Secretariat must ensure monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy while Members must follow up on their commitments, including the resolutions.

The five strategic objectives were the five ways in which the IPU would make an impact on the world. All of them were about creating “parliamentary ecosystems for democracy, for everyone”. The idea behind creating parliamentary ecosystems was to move away from seeing parliaments in isolation and more towards looking at them as part of an integrated system. There were also four policy priorities that had been identified by Members: (1) climate change; (2) democracy, human rights and gender equality; (3) peace and security; and (4) sustainable development for all.

A few changes had been made compared to the previous IPU Strategy. The first change related to the establishment of four policy priorities as described above. The second change concerned a new focus on marginalized groups, resilience and strengthened accountability. The third change brought in more integration with a parliamentary ecosystems approach. Many of the issues concerning the IPU were intersectional and should therefore be dealt with together. In that context, youth would be considered a cross-cutting driver of change and mainstreamed throughout the Strategy rather than given a bubble of its own. The fourth change related to an increased role of communications. The idea was to make sure parliamentarians were connected to each other online. Parliamentarians should be having conversations on a regular basis, participating in communities of practice and keeping up the momentum between Assemblies.

**Ms. C.I. López Castro** (Mexico) insisted that youth be added to the policy priority entitled “democracy, human rights and gender equality”. She agreed that youth was a cross-cutting issue, but it should also be considered a policy priority.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) said that the IPU President and Secretary General had already promised to give more emphasis to youth in the text of the Strategy. Youth was mentioned only briefly when it should in fact be the foundation of work at the IPU. He supported the proposal by Ms. López Castro to make youth part of the policy priority entitled “democracy, human rights and gender equality”. Alternatively, youth could be a separate policy priority. Making youth a cross-cutting issue was a good idea, but it was not enough.

**Ms. J. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala** (South Africa) supported the comments made by Ms. López Castro and Mr. Lechte. It was important to add “youth participation” to the policy priority entitled “democracy, human rights and gender equality”.

South Africa had proposed a number of youth-related amendments to the Strategy. The term “youth participation/empowerment” should be added to the following sentence to read like so: “The IPU’s work is predicated on the idea that strong and effective parliaments can safeguard fundamental human rights, ensure sustainable development that leaves no one behind, achieve gender equality **and youth participation/empowerment**, create pathways for peace and security, and protect the planet.” Similarly, the term “youth participation” should be added to the following sentence to read like so: “These four policy areas are of equal importance: climate change; democracy, human rights, gender equality **and youth participation**; peace and security; and sustainable development for all.”

**Ms. F. Furaha Muyumba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) supported the comments made by Ms. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala, Ms. López Castro and Mr. Lechte. Youth should be a cross-cutting issue but was currently not visible enough. The text should be amended to bring youth out more clearly.

**Mr. M. Bouva** (Suriname), former President of the Board of the Forum, supported the comments made thus far. It was better to use the word “youth empowerment” rather than “youth participation”, as was done in the previous IPU Strategy, since it was more encompassing. Youth empowerment was an ongoing process and must therefore be duly reflected in the Strategy.

**Mr. V. Tsvangirai** (Zimbabwe) supported the points made by Ms. López Castro and Mr. Lechte and Ms. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala. Young people represented more than 70 per cent of the population of Africa. It was therefore very important to ensure that the Strategy placed an emphasis on youth.

**Ms. F. Martonffy** (IPU Consultant) took note of the comment made by Ms. López Castro and Mr. Tsvangirai and assured Ms. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala that the proposed amendments from South Africa had been received. In response to Mr. Bouva, she said that it was not only about maintaining past approaches but about evolving them. The IPU should take what worked from the past and build on it to become as inclusive and equitable as possible. In response to Mr. Lechte, she said that making youth a cross-cutting issue was just one of the many dimensions that were needed to make change in the world.

The Strategy was an evolving document and all feedback collected would be incorporated into the text. However, the important thing was for the Forum of Young Parliamentarians to think collectively about how it wished to affect the Strategy. It should decide what it most wanted to achieve over the next five years and concentrate its efforts there. Youth was needed across all strategic objectives.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) said that the necessary changes must be made in the text of the Strategy before it was approved at the final session of the Governing Council. The Forum could not think about the following five years until the changes were made.

**Ms. C.I. López Castro** (Mexico) said that the Forum wanted to see the changes in the Strategy ahead of its approval. It was no use talking about the next five years without having the changes in place.

**Ms. J. Nemadzinga-Tshabalala** (South Africa) agreed that the changes must be made.

**Ms. F. Martonffy** (IPU Consultant) said that many different IPU bodies were submitting amendments to the Strategy. It might not be realistic to make the changes ahead of its approval. However, the version of the Strategy that would be approved at the final session of the Governing Council was not the final version. There would be a process for finalizing the Strategy several weeks after the Assembly where the changes would be made.

**Mr. U. Lechte** (Germany) said that it was his understanding that the Strategy would be finalized at the final session of the Governing Council.

**Mr. M. Bouva** (Suriname), former President of the Board of the Forum, said that delegates would vote on the current version of the Strategy. However, the Forum would be able to submit a note indicating what it wished to change if it so wished.

*The sitting rose at 18:55.*

**Open session of the Committee to Promote Respect  
for International Humanitarian Law**  
***Supporting a mine-free world: Universalization and  
implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention***

**SITTING OF MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER**

(Morning)

*The session was called to order at 11:30 CEST with Ms. Á. Vadai (Hungary), President of the Committee, in the Chair.*

**The Chair** said that anti-personnel mines were devastating weapons that destroyed lives during and after conflict. They subjected innocent people to disability, insecurity and the fear of detonating a mine when simply carrying out everyday activities. The adoption of the Ottawa Convention (the Convention) in 1997 had been a moment of hope after dedicated work designed to end suffering, protect victims and stop casualties. Before the Convention had been adopted, the IPU had held debates and adopted resolutions calling for a comprehensive legal framework to end mine use. The speed and impact of the Convention had been supported by the political commitment of many parliamentarians and the IPU's prioritization of the Convention's aims. Now widely ratified, the Convention had helped reduce both civilian casualties and the trade in and use of anti-personnel mines. However, there was room for improvement across the world, illustrated by a recent increase in the number of mine victims, a fall in ratifications, and a weakening of implementation efforts.

**Mr. J.C. Ruan** (Director, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit), accompanying his comments with a digital slide presentation, said that, after high-profile personalities had advocated for the elimination of anti-personnel mines, States had united to ban such mines, and the IPU had played a critical role in encouraging States to join the resulting Convention. Despite the Convention's success, there were still life and death challenges to be faced in an ever-changing landscape.

Anti-personnel mines had previously been widely deployed as they had been deemed militarily effective. More recently, their military utility had been seen as outweighed by their indiscriminate nature and negative impact on individuals and communities, including through injury, living with long term disability and economic disadvantage, difficulties regarding the return of displaced people, and death.

Record-low mine casualties had started to rise in the last five years due to new conflicts. While progress had been made in addressing case numbers, implementation momentum had slowed in some States; but it could be regained with support from all quarters. In that regard, States Parties had adopted the Oslo Action Plan in 2019 and had set an aspirational goal to implement the Convention as fully as possible by 2025.

The success of the Convention's universalization obligation was evidenced by the 164 States currently party to the Convention. However, some States not party to the Convention had recently indicated that they were not yet ready to join despite agreeing with the Convention's humanitarian aims. He encouraged those States to reconsider, noting there were transitional stages available before joining the Convention in full.

The Convention obligation to destroy stockpiled anti-personnel mines had led to the destruction of 53 million units. It was hoped that several million more would follow once States that had missed their deadlines had resolved logistical issues. In all, 67 States Parties held approximately 140,000 mines for permitted purposes. Those States had been requested to review arrangements annually, and to consider alternatives such as deminers' training with 3D-printed material.

Under the Convention, mine-affected States were obliged to identify mined areas, exclude civilians from there, and destroy all mines in those areas within 10 years of the Convention's entry into force. Of the 63 States with such obligations, 33 had fulfilled them. The list of mine-affected States could potentially grow as the presence of some improvised mines might not yet have been reported. While some progress was always apparent, States Parties faced different challenges, including access to mined areas, national and international funding constraints and newly laid mines, as well as the need to improve methodologies, increase funding and strengthen national ownership. The four elements of national ownership were: maintaining high levels of national interest in the Convention; empowering and providing relevant State entities with the human, material and financial capacity to fulfil Convention obligations; articulating the measures to tackle Convention-related issues; and making a regular and significant national financial commitment.

The Convention had been the first to include obligations to assist the survivors of weapons that it sought to ban. States Parties understood that victim assistance did not necessarily involve new work, but could often be delivered via broader national policy and legal frameworks on issues such as education, poverty reduction and the rights of persons with disabilities. The 30 States that had reported a responsibility for mine survivors had made progress, but faced implementation constraints around mobilizing significant national and international resources, and a lack of access to resources due to the remote location of many mine-affected communities. That said, synergies could be leveraged for the substantial number of States that were party to both the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Additional obligations under the Convention included donor cooperation and assistance, which many States had signalled as an important factor in their decision to join the Convention.

States both party and not party to the Convention tended to comply with it. Currently, the Convention's President was prioritizing the requirement for States to report how they were giving effect to the Convention, as 52 States had not yet submitted that report. The reporting deadline under the Oslo Action Plan was end of 2021. Transparency reporting was historically low. Only about half of States Parties were submitting annual transparency reports as required. Some States without implementation obligations were choosing not to report rather than submitting simplified reports. It was important that all States remained involved, particularly given recent mounting casualties.

Contrary to the view of some States, the Convention was not a matter for the defence ministry alone, but a cross-government issue affecting development, human rights, health and good governance.

**Ms. J. Dresner** (International Policy and Partnerships Director, Mines Advisory Group (MAG)), accompanying her comments with a digital slide presentation, said that MAG specialized in addressing the causes and consequences of conflict. Since its foundation, MAG had helped over 18 million people in 68 countries, and had co-received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. MAG currently worked in 28 countries and employed more than 5,000 people, 95 per cent of whom were locally recruited. Its partnerships with States working on stockpile destruction, as well as weapons and ammunition management, often led to the discovery of mines and their reporting under the Convention.

Ninety-five per cent of MAG's work was supported by international donors, underlining the importance of the Convention's provisions on international cooperation and assistance. Parliamentarians had been playing an important role in ensuring that mine-action support continued despite pandemic-related pressures on aid budgets.

In 2020, mine-induced deaths and injuries had reached a three-year high. Eighty per cent of the casualties (where known) had been civilians, with half of those civilians being children. Casualties were highest in Afghanistan, Mali, Myanmar, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In situations of ongoing conflict, mine contamination prevented humanitarian aid delivery and threatened first responders. However, the positive impact of the Convention in post-conflict States Parties was evidenced by a decline in annual casualties in those countries.

Mines also had a critical role in displacement. They prevented access to key infrastructure and critical resources, and deterred displaced persons from returning home. Casualties had been increasing in Chad, Iraq, Nigeria, the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel. Along the South Sudan border, mine contamination left over from historical conflicts increased the risk of harm to refugees and internally displaced people, as they tended to cross the border frequently. Climate-change-induced flooding in fertile but mine-contaminated areas of South Sudan also showed that mines affected food security. As people sought other sources of income and food, further displacement often ensued.

The most highly mine-contaminated countries were Cambodia and Iraq, followed by Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Thailand, Turkey and Yemen. They all had over 20 km<sup>2</sup> of mined land. Meeting Convention deadlines was challenging. Painstaking manual searches of the ground made demining very labour intensive and costly, although other methods could sometimes speed up clearance. The pandemic had hampered work, stopped it, or increased costs.

While there were allegations of some continued deployment of conventional mines, non-state actors' use of improvised devices was more significant. That trend was partly due to the success of conventional arms control, which had obliged non-state actors to seek illicit weapons procurement routes. Improvised mines had first appeared in Iraq, Syria and northern Lebanon during the conflict involving the so-called Islamic State (IS). However, technology and tactics transfer had been observed across other regions where IS-affiliated groups operated. As a result, there was now significant mine contamination across the Sahel and Lake Chad basin, an additional spread eastwards, including into northern Mozambique, and longer-lasting problems in Somalia. The unpredictability of improvised devices had obliged clearance organizations to develop new methodologies while continuing to prioritize staff safety and security. Challenges presented by ongoing conflicts included: a lack of data on mine detection and clearance; mines in inaccessible areas; difficulties in deploying teams; and the increased targeting of humanitarian workers by non-state combatants unwilling to uphold the principles of international humanitarian law.

Parliamentarians had a crucial role to play in tackling anti-personnel mines by: displaying political will; allocating sufficient resources to allow relevant national authorities to take ownership of the issue; and ensuring that compliance with or accession to the Convention remained high on domestic political agendas.

**Ms. S. Ménard April** (Legal adviser, Advisory Services on International Humanitarian Law, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), accompanying her comments with a digital slide presentation, said that she would use practical examples to discuss how parliamentarians could support domestic implementation of the Convention.

Article 9 mandated implementation of the Convention through domestic legislative measures, administrative instruments and changes to texts such as military doctrines. Implementation measures were important for States that both were and were not party to the Convention because: they enhanced States' preparedness; they demonstrated a national commitment to the Convention; they delivered on the widely approved ICRC resolution *Bringing IHL Home*; and they promoted better victim support. When domestically implementing the Convention, States were recommended to enshrine well-defined offences and sentences in statute, rather than relying solely on policies or action plans. The ICRC had published a checklist to support States with the effective domestication of the Convention, or the improvement of existing domestic provisions. For example, States could enact laws to mandate the physical and psychological support of mine victims, demonstrating that legislators could add value not only in terms of policies but also through binding obligations on the State. The ICRC had recorded existing examples of that approach so as to share good practices with States interested in following suit. Some States had given employers financial incentives to facilitate the economic inclusion of people with mine-related disabilities, while others had created new statutory authorities with a mandate to coordinate anti-mine activities. All such work required adequate budget allocation and resourcing, which only MPs could ensure.

Parliamentarians could also support the Convention (whether or not their States were party to it) by: advocating for Convention ratification; enacting the legislative and other procedural steps needed for ratification; evaluating the quality of existing Convention-related statute and filling any gaps with improved and additional legislation; ensuring relevant laws were accessible in local languages and comprehensible to local communities; sharing good implementation practices internationally, including through work related to the ICRC's *Bringing IHL Home* resolution and discussions such as the present meeting; approving adequate budget allocation to ensure legally mandated action became a reality on the ground; showing leadership so that momentum on Convention-related work could be maintained; scrutinizing proposed action to ensure it included the needs of all relevant communities; and advocating for continuous victim assistance programmes. She invited participants to consult the Oslo Plan of Action for further examples.

**Mr. N. Alalou** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, during the conflict in Syria, people had planted mines in unexpected areas without disclosing their location. That had had an extremely negative impact on many aspects of daily life and led to civilian casualties across the country, including among children. As soon as possible, Syrian and Russian military personnel had started mine clearance. In other areas of the world, clearance had remained difficult long after conflict had ceased. All logistical and technical support to current demining efforts in Syria would be greatly appreciated.

**Mr. C. Lacroix** (Belgium), Member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, said that Belgium had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention and pass domestic legislation to ban anti-personnel mines. Belgium aimed for a sustainable and all-encompassing approach to peacemaking and promoting stability, using its foreign affairs and development policies to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and States that were keen to promote the Convention's aims. That support should involve evaluating the humanitarian needs of each situation, as well as the aid recipients' national position on the Convention and its domestic laws on mine clearance. Receiving support should be combined with a long-term commitment to stop mine contamination. It was also important to integrate anti-personnel mine policies into post-conflict peacebuilding work, and to ensure geographic and thematic convergence between States' foreign affairs and international development policies, which Belgium had done in several instances. He asked the panellists whether the approach to implementation of existing anti-personnel mine humanitarian law instruments would gain from being more comprehensive, with links to other policies and initiatives, so as to achieve the desired results.

**Mr. W. David** (United Kingdom) said that a number of UK parliamentarians were advocating for the reversal of cuts to the UK development aid budget. The cuts had had a catastrophic impact on development projects throughout the world, including mine-clearance efforts. He paid tribute to organizations such as MAG, and the brave dedication of their frontline workers, even in the face of potential injury, terrorist attack and death. Supporting their efforts was a moral obligation. Although some analytical work on mines was done under a UK parliamentary committee, all MPs must take such work more seriously.

**Mr. A. Ware** (Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND)) said that his organization had cooperated with the IPU in 2020 to produce an online handbook in English and French on disarmament security and sustainable development. It included material on mines in populated areas, and examples of good parliamentary practice on implementing the Convention, such as pressing sovereign wealth and other State-controlled funds to step up funding for mine clearance and support, and to refrain from investing in the mining industry. He asked the panellists whether they advocated such financial measures.

**Mr. H. Julien-Laferrrière** (France) drew attention to a project to agree an international political declaration on protecting civilians against explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). Although delayed by the pandemic, 90 States that were committed to strengthening international humanitarian law through the said draft declaration were continuing their work. The urbanization of modern conflict had seen civilian casualties rise from 15 per cent at the start of the twentieth century to 90 per cent at present. The EWIPA initiative addressed issues relating to those of urban mine clearance, such as forced displacement and the destruction of education and healthcare infrastructure. He highlighted the relevance to the present discussion of the work of several NGOs based in his home town; they were strong advocates of the Convention. He had also considered mine contamination issues during his recent visit to eastern Syria.

Similarly to the Ottawa Convention, the draft EWIPA declaration had been started by a number of NGOs. It had then been taken on by MPs from a group of mainly European countries. The initiative's hundreds of parliamentary signatories had been asked to press their governments either to begin supporting, or step up their involvement in, work to tackle explosive weapons in populated areas. He encouraged participants to visit the EWIPA website, find out whether their country was involved, and help to advocate for the adoption and implementation of the EWIPA declaration.

**Mr. S. Cogolati** (Belgium) said that he hoped that more parliamentarians would sign up to the EWIPA declaration, including those from outside Europe. The adoption of a strong, non-legally binding declaration with wide-ranging parliamentary support would help protect civilians caught in urban conflict.

**Mr. J.W. Kiarie** (Kenya), Member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, said that parliaments had been advocating for the Convention's implementation since its adoption. Although mine clearance would always be crucial, he agreed that victim assistance was the most important aspect of current work.



Some parliaments had not taken significant action since adopting the Convention. To address that, they might consider legislating to harness new technology and strengthen assistance to mine victims. Parliaments that had ratified the Convention some time ago should aim to be pacesetters and thought leaders that others could follow as they legislated for the next phase of Convention-related work.

**Ms. G. Bañuelos** (Mexico), Member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, expressed concern that the mine-eradication goals set for the end of the decade would not be met, and that casualties had been increasing. There were reports that new mines were being manufactured in certain countries and deployed in others. There was no justification for the use of anti-personnel mines. Although Mexico did not use mines, it was keen to be a strong voice in the international search for solutions that would end mine use and reintegrate victims into the social and economic life of their communities. Countries that continued to manufacture mines should be supportively urged to consider the good of humanity.

**Ms. J. Salman** (Bahrain), Member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, said that signing the Convention was not sufficient and that parliamentarians should focus on implementation. She believed the issue of mines was related to illegal trafficking, as armed criminal groups were unlawfully laying mines after procuring them through arms trafficking channels. The problem would never end unless parliamentarians consistently made it their priority to urge the international community both to exercise proper oversight of those continuing to trade in weapons that victimized the poor and vulnerable, and to make full use of instruments that banned arms trafficking.

**Mr. J.C. Ruan** (Director, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit) said that States Parties had an obligation to provide a conducive national-level implementation environment, whether working to eradicate mines in their own territory, or offering donor assistance. He noted the importance of participants' interventions, including on: the need for regular national-level stakeholder engagement (together with cross-border dialogues such as EWIPA) followed by effective national legislation to implement the Convention; disinvesting in structures associated with anti-personnel mine production (although only a handful of States continued to manufacture mines); and widely sharing innovative ideas about victim assistance. He noted that the licit trade in mines had all but stopped, although illegal transfers and explosives harvesting continued to be a serious problem that merited further discussion.

**Ms. J. Dresner** (International Policy and Partnerships Director, MAG) said that MAG was actively engaged in the EWIPA initiative, whose impact was being felt on the ground. Especially in urban conflict settings, the wide variety of munitions involved made operational responses more complex and increased even further the need to roll out humanitarian initiatives. Mine-related issues were often viewed in isolation, despite frequently overlapping with other challenges including development, wider conflict, and stabilization efforts. Such overlaps were crucial to designing people-centred responses and could sometimes open up new streams of finance. That was because securing funds for mine clearance tended to be easier as part of broader development or conflict-prevention strategy rather than as an activity in its own right. Thought leadership was also important, as States who had been party to the Convention for many years had a great deal of expertise to share with newer signatories. She noted that arms trafficking was an unfortunate consequence of the success of licit arms control. Mine clearance should not be considered separately from illicit arms activities, as there was growing evidence that conventional minefields were being harvested for components used to manufacture improvised explosives. That was a complex issue that interested parties should focus on with greater energy. She thanked all parliamentarians who pushed their governments to act on mine-related issues.

**Ms. S. Ménard-April** (Legal adviser, Advisory Services on International Humanitarian Law, ICRC) said that the exchange of good practices at the present meeting was exactly what was needed. She encouraged long-standing States Parties to continue innovative implementation as well as discussions within EWIPA, as ICRC had also noticed its positive effects.

**The Chair** said that the Committee would: concentrate on victim assistance; organize meetings to foster the exchange of good practices, including through regional and worldwide expert-led discussions; encourage fellow MPs to ensure national parliaments allocated sufficient funds to support all those working towards a mine-free world; and continue strong advocacy of universal adherence to the Convention and renewed implementation efforts. She hoped the IPU would be a link between national parliaments and the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, and encouraged Committee members to report the results of the present discussions to their geopolitical groups and parliaments.

**Mr. C. Lacroix** (Belgium), Member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, suggested that Committee members could consider drafting a text, which they could recommend to their respective geopolitical groups as material to be developed into a resolution that could command wide consensus. That approach could help gather collective expertise and practical implementation tools from across the world to support the work of national parliaments.

**The Chair** urged members to take on a leading role as individual MPs in resolving mine-related issues. While she supported the proposal for a resolution, she suggested that generating support for the Convention and its aims within national parliaments might be a more powerful tool.

*The session rose at 13:05 CEST.*

## Workshop on Climate Change

**SUNDAY, 28 NOVEMBER**

(Morning)

*The sitting was called to order at 11:35 with Ms. A. Mulder (Netherlands) in the Chair.*

**Ms. C. Kinuthia-Njenga** (Director of the Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress Division, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)) said that the UNFCCC was one of three conventions that had emerged out of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The UNFCCC process was a party-led process that allowed States and non-State actors to come together to stop the climate crisis and ensure low-emission, resilient, inclusive and sustainable development for all. Since the Convention had entered into force, parties had met annually at sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to monitor implementation. The most recent session had been the 26th, held in Glasgow (COP26) in October/November 2021. After the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and the Paris Agreement in 2015, parties to those instruments had been meeting, at the same time as the COP, at the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA). The COP, CMP and CMA were supreme decision-making bodies under the UNFCCC. While those bodies took the politically relevant decisions, much of the technical work was done by two subsidiary bodies, namely the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, which met during the first week of the sessions as well as in between sessions.

During the COP26, delegates had engaged in intense negotiations and attended side events on many different issues of interest. In parallel to the negotiations, non-party stakeholders, such as civil society organizations and UN agencies, had also undertaken a rich programme of activities. Indeed, the number of observers had been increasing over the years, now reaching a total of 3500. Examples of events included the World Leaders Summit, attended by 122 Heads of State and Government, and a special event of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to present the results of the latest report on climate science. There had also been a workshop on gender and climate change, gatherings of indigenous knowledge holders and events on youth participation, energy, finance, sports, oceans, resilience and cities.

COP26 had led to many incredible results. Much progress had been made on adaptation, leading to a new discussion and programme of work on the topic. Mitigation and finance had also been strengthened. One of the most significant breakthroughs had been that, after six years of negotiations, pending items to achieve the full implementation of the Paris Agreement on carbon markets and transparency had been approved.

The outcome document of COP26 was popularly known as the Glasgow Climate Pact. It was a collection of landmark cover decisions in which parties had agreed to step up efforts in reducing emissions, adapting to climate change and providing climate finance and support to developing countries. There had been a specific emphasis on the urgency of addressing climate change given that the necessary science was already available. She highlighted a number of key achievements from the Pact. First, parties had established a work programme to scale up mitigation efforts and requested that all parties strengthen their 2030 targets, including by aligning themselves with the goal to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Prior to COP26, several countries had submitted their revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) but were still falling way behind expected targets. She called on parliamentarians to develop their NDCs and support them with policies and legislation. Second, parties had launched a work programme on adaptation, which was a major win particularly for developing countries. An emphasis had also been placed on doubling the amount of climate finance available to developing countries for adaptation purposes. Third, the Pact urged developed countries to fully deliver on the US\$ 100 billion goal for developing countries and backed a new work programme to set a new, collective, quantified goal on climate finance. However, successful implementation of the UNFCCC required not only adequate finance but also adequate capacity and technological innovation for both mitigation and adaptation. Fourth, parties had established the Glasgow dialogue on funding for loss and damage which would address the adverse effects of climate change, including socioeconomic and environmental threats. The establishment of the dialogue had reiterated the urgent need to scale up action and support on the issue. Lastly, the Pact had been revolutionary in its efforts to: (1) address human rights; (2) promote gender equality and women's empowerment; (3) ensure the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans and land; (4) acknowledge the key role of indigenous people, local communities and civil society; (5) ensure meaningful youth participation; and (6) address the concept of climate justice.

She wished to conclude by presenting a few lines of action for the future. First, COP26 had highlighted the indispensable value of multilateralism in addressing the climate crisis, particularly under extraordinary global circumstances. There was therefore a vital need to continue supporting multilateralism in the future. Collaboration was needed on the national, regional and international levels between all relevant stakeholders, including financiers, technology developers and local communities. Second, the outcomes of COP26 were a good basis for reducing emissions, enhancing adaptation capacities and supporting developing countries and vulnerable communities to implement climate policies. However, true transformation would only be possible if countries translated their pledges into action. It was there that the role of parliamentarians was crucial. Parliamentarians must ensure that their country's commitments were reflected in national legislation and policies as well as in local plans and bylaws. The time had come for implementation.

**Ms. S. Sheehan** (United Kingdom) highlighted the urgency with which countries needed to act. Global warming was already at 1.1 degrees Celsius. The carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere had already surpassed the recommended 400 parts per million. Extreme weather events were also becoming increasingly more frequent and severe. The time to act was now. In her opinion, one of the major achievements of COP26 had been the mention of fossil fuels in the final outcome document. It had, however, been watered down to say "phasedown" rather than "phase-out". Ensuring implementation was currently more important than stating further ambitions. Parliamentarians must implement the pledges made by governments, particularly through legislation.

**A representative of Zimbabwe** said that Africa was the continent that contributed the least to climate change, accounting for only 5 per cent of global emissions. It was very open to climate-conscious development but currently did not have the capacities for it. Developed countries must deliver on their promise to make US\$ 100 billion of climate financing available to developing countries. He wished to know how Africa could help further despite contributing very little to climate change.

**Mr. W. William** (Seychelles) said that he did not see any system via which parliamentarians could measure progress. He asked whether a timeframe existed by which countries should submit their revised NDCs.

**A representative of Finland** said that the decision to "phase down" rather than "phase out" coal was disappointing. Giving up fossil fuels would be key to limiting climate change. She asked what could be done to give up fossil fuels more quickly.

**Ms. C. Kinuthia-Njenga** (Director of the Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress Division, UNFCCC) agreed with the delegate from the United Kingdom on the urgency with which countries needed to act. The UN Secretary-General himself had left COP26 pleased with the outcome while also emphasizing the need for accelerated action. It was indeed an unprecedented achievement for fossil fuels, specifically coal, to have been mentioned in one of the cover decisions, even if watered down. The decision had shown that the Parties were starting to address one of the greatest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. It would now be possible to monitor countries on the issue of coal.

In response to the delegate from Zimbabwe, the UNFCCC Secretariat would be calling on developing countries to participate in the conversation on a new global goal on finance, particularly for adaptation. Although mitigation and adaptation were needed in equal measure, developing countries were struggling the most with adaptation. She agreed that developing countries did not have the capacities to implement climate change measures. The US\$ 100 billion pledge had still not come through, thus affecting the pace at which developing countries could adapt and mitigate. It was important to systematically develop frameworks that brought in the capacity at country level. Developing countries should harness the various facilities available including the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Technology Centre and Network.

In response to the delegate from the Seychelles, the window for submitting revised NDCs remained open. She hoped that the revised NDCs would take into account new developments from COP26, including the issue of coal. One important component of measuring progress was the Global Stocktake, a process by which parties and non-party stakeholders could assess the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The yardsticks for measuring progress were already in place. For example, it had been agreed that carbon dioxide emissions must be reduced by 45 per cent by 2030 to achieve the 1.5 degrees Celsius target. It was now a question of making the mechanisms, capacities, finance and technology available, particularly in developing countries.

**A representative of Greece** said that the results of COP26 were a good basis on which to build, but more efforts were needed. She asked what could be done for climate change between now and 2030, particularly on issues such as deforestation and natural gas. Many countries, including Greece, had agreed to reduce their use of coal but continued to use natural gas which was also a fossil fuel.

**A representative of Bahrain** said that Bahrain was taking a major interest in climate issues. It had, for instance, amended its legislation and engaged the private sector. Parliamentarians must stand together and address climate change on the national, regional and international levels. Many developing countries, however, could not act due to financial difficulties and limited capacities. It was not enough to make decisions on paper. Tangible steps were needed to support those most in need. He drew attention to the political differences between China, Russia, the United States of America and India. Those differences remained unresolved and were hindering global aspirations for green and sustainable development.

**Ms. C. Kinuthia-Njenga** (Director of the Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress Division, UNFCCC) said that political differences could be resolved by applying the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The transition from fossil fuels to the green economy must be done in a just way with countries going at their own pace. It was particularly important to consider the socioeconomics of the transition. For example, how would countries support the millions of people whose livelihoods depended on coal once coal had been decommissioned? The same applied in the case of natural gas which was indeed another fossil fuel. The conversation was very much linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She emphasized the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach which addressed not only the question of reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also of increasing technological advancement, maintaining socioeconomic development, creating job opportunities and reskilling people in new areas of work.

Between now and 2030, it was very important to ensure that every key player had a stake in the process, including governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, indigenous people, and youth. Indeed, climate change was becoming a broader and more comprehensive package which called for partnerships and collaboration. There would be more ownership and commitment if all stakeholders were involved. Legislation also tended to be more successful when drafted in a consultative manner.

She agreed that taking decisions was not enough and that action was needed. It was important to design programmes, negotiations and collaborations containing specific requests and timeframes. The process must occur in a spirit of trust, integrity, commitment, inclusivity and transparency. Both developed and developing countries must be held accountable for their commitments to ensure real transformation on the ground.

**A representative of France** said that France had launched a very ambitious COVID-19 recovery plan worth 100 billion euros. As much as 30 per cent of the plan was dedicated to decarbonizing the country's industry, particularly transport and agriculture. She supported the impetus away from fossil fuels. It was necessary to establish country to country exchanges on mitigation and adaptation. She agreed, however, that adaptation was more pressing.

**A representative of Algeria** said that Algeria was greatly affected by climate change and had taken many measures to address it. It had committed to decreasing emissions by 20–22 per cent and was working on a national action plan containing 155 projects on reducing greenhouse gases, promoting adaptation and improving climate governance. The country was working on the global level having committed to a number of international instruments and conventions. National legislation had also been passed focusing on the energy sector in terms of mitigation and the forestry sector in terms of adaptation. Work was also underway to promote local climate change governance so that local communities could contribute to the national plan. Parliamentarians must promote international cooperation to achieve sustainable development.

**A representative of India** said that India was a party to the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement and had taken many measures to combat climate change. It had submitted its NDCs, outlining eight targets for the period 2021–2030. They included a target to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emission intensity by 33–35 per cent by 2030 and a target to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover, also by 2030. At COP26, India had presented several other key objectives that it was on track to achieve, such as the objective to build up its non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 gigawatts by 2030 and to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2070.

He reminded delegates that India made up 18 per cent of the global population yet accounted for less than 5 per cent of carbon emissions. Finance was one of the most critical enablers of climate action in developing countries, along with technology development and transfer and capacity building support. India expected developed countries to deliver on their US\$ 100 billion a year promise as soon as possible. The funding should be dedicated to climate action alone. Parliaments should play a proactive role in strengthening institutional mechanisms to ensure climate justice. India stood committed to addressing climate change through multilateralism and resolute domestic actions. The success of multilateralism depended on the transparent, inclusive, party-driven and consensus-based nature of the UNFCCC process.

**Ms. M. Guerra** (Mexico) said that Mexico had created a working group within the Chamber of Deputies on the role of parliaments as drivers of climate action. The working group aimed to ensure implementation of the 17 SDGs, particularly SDGs 13, 14 and 15, in a cross sectoral manner across all committees. Its work was organized around four pillars: consensus, budget, capacity building and open parliament. Without consensus, it would not be possible to move forward on issues such as ocean conservation and land restoration. Having sufficient budgets would ensure that the SDGs could be achieved in a clear and consistent way. It was important to strengthen institutional capabilities through workshops, training sessions and awareness raising activities, inviting governmental bodies, nongovernmental organizations and universities to participate. Open parliament meant inclusion, participation, vision and good governance. She recommended that parliaments worldwide put in place a similar framework.

**A representative of Andorra** said that the Parliament of Andorra had worked together with its young people (citizens, MPs and political party members) to draft a declaration acknowledging the urgency of the climate crisis. The process had taken a year to complete and had involved many debates. A series of climate change actions had been put together in conjunction with the declaration which covered topics including agriculture, labour, education, sustainable mobility, water, energy, climate change, the circular economy, environment, landscapes and biodiversity. Andorra had also approved many climate change laws, including laws on the protection of the environment, landscapes and biodiversity as well as on the energy transition. Other laws were in the process of being drafted, such as those on the circular economy, the diversification of the agricultural sector and waste recycling.

**A representative of Pakistan** said that every individual and country must act to combat climate change. Pakistan was considered one of the smallest emitters of greenhouse gases, accounting for less than 1 per cent of the global total, and yet was extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The country had responded to the challenge with a robust climate agenda. The agenda consisted of several flagship initiatives, such as the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami project, which set out to plant 10 billion trees across the country. There was also an ecosystem restoration initiative that would accelerate adaptation and mitigation measures in the areas of afforestation, biodiversity and conservation, as well as an independent and transparent financial mechanism called the Ecosystem Restoration Fund. He reminded developed countries of their responsibilities towards developing countries.

**Ms. S. Sheehan** (United Kingdom) recognized the importance of transferring finance from the developed world to the developing world. It was with regret that the US\$ 100 billion goal had not been met although the President of COP26 would continue working on it until the end of his term. It was important to celebrate Scotland's contribution to the loss and damage fund as well as the approval of a methodology for financial markets to measure carbon. The methodology would be important to encourage investment from the private sector and help governments move away from fossil fuels. The inclusion of methane and forests in the final outcome document was also very positive.

**A representative of Zambia** said that the biggest challenge in Zambia was the use of charcoal as the primary source of energy. The charcoal industry had brought about a great deal of deforestation but was also one of the country's biggest employers. The transition to a greener economy had therefore caused conflict between the Government and the citizens. Nevertheless, the Government would continue doing everything possible to meet the necessary requirements by 2030. The right climate laws were already being enacted and afforestation was increasing.

**A representative of Gabon** said that one of the biggest threats to Gabon was rising sea levels. The Parliament was strengthening its legal framework to be able to better implement the SDGs. Sharing good practices would help parliamentarians enact the right legislation.

**A representative of Egypt** said that the Egyptian Government had been among the first to adopt the proper measures against climate change. It had embarked on a number of renewable energy projects and mitigation programmes and had been chosen to host COP27. COP27 would concentrate on Africa and its basic needs, particularly funding needs related to mitigation and reduction of emissions. Egypt had launched its own national strategy on climate change which had five major components: (1) lowering its carbon footprint; (2) moving towards clean energy; (3) protecting the health of its population; (4) promoting good climate governance; and (5) securing greater investments in clean energy and scientific research. It had also put in place the National Council for Climate Change which was the main national body responsible for addressing the climate crisis.

**Mr. W. William** (Seychelles) said that the pledge for US\$ 100 billion should be approached in two ways: in terms of financing but also in terms of technology transfer and technical assistance. It would thus be more realistic to achieve. Countries should work together to develop the necessary laws and policies. There was also a need for tangible, measurable pledges rather than talking in general terms. Only then could parliamentarians fulfil their role to ensure oversight, accountability and transparency.

**A representative of Uruguay** said that the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development should help countries to draft the right laws. Economic development was causing pollution, but not all countries polluted the planet on equal terms. Developed countries had two responsibilities: (1) reduce emissions and (2) offer funding to less developed countries. Pollution would only get worse if action was not taken.

**A representative of Norway** said that the Glasgow Climate Pact was a step in the right direction since it set out concrete points of action. However, more action was needed to keep temperatures below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Norway had been conducting a debate on its own role in climate change both domestically and internationally, including in the exploitation of oil and gas. It was the responsibility of parliamentarians to enact laws and policies that laid the groundwork for new, concrete solutions. For example, Norway had set itself a goal to achieve zero emissions in the car industry and was now at a point where electric vehicles took up more than 60 per cent of the personal vehicle market. It had been possible thanks to concrete legislation. He hoped that others would follow Norway's lead. It was important to share experiences so that countries could learn from each other.

**A representative of Zimbabwe** said that the parliamentary committee for climate and environment in Zimbabwe was very committed to pushing the agenda for sustainable and environmentally friendly businesses. There was a hunger to put in place sustainable mechanisms, such as solar power. He called on the international community to assist Zimbabwe in that regard.

*A video was played on the ways in which parliamentarians could boost sustainable development.*

**Mr. Y. Tsolov** (IPU Consultant) said that he had been asked to conduct a mapping and review of emerging parliamentary practices on the implementation of the SDGs. His work focused on three main areas: (1) SDG integration in core parliamentary functions; (2) institutional arrangements within parliaments, such as dedicated SDG committees, commissions or working groups; and (3) supplementary activities, such as monitoring tools, stakeholder engagement and participation in voluntary national reviews (VNRs). The overall objective of his work was to strengthen the community of practice and showcase different examples of SDG implementation. The findings were based on an IPU-SDG questionnaire submitted to all Members in the summer of 2021. However, he had also utilized information from national parliaments, such as SDG progress reports and VNRs, to complement the findings. The final version of the review would include individual case studies or country examples that had been developed based on the research phase but also on consultations conducted at the 143rd IPU Assembly in Madrid.

Some preliminary findings were available although they were still a work in progress. Most countries had established a parliamentary committee, working group or caucus specifically dedicated to the SDGs. Some countries utilized specialized methods or tools to review relevant legislation or budgeting in terms of their compliance with the SDGs. There were several systematized oversight procedures in place to follow up on SDG progress. Some countries had brought in innovative and digital tools for improved SDG monitoring to support a lack of data. Most countries were participating actively in the VNR deliberations and in national inter-institutional coordination arrangements. Some parliaments had developed specific SDG stakeholder and citizen engagement mechanisms. Many parliaments engaged in SDG localization. Partnerships had also been created between different stakeholders, including development partners. Lastly, some countries worked with oversight and audit institutions and actively contributed to the formulation of the national development plans.

There were two thematic areas that were being examined. The first area related to the implementation of the universal health coverage targets under SDG 3 on health. The second area looked at climate change measures and how those measures had been integrated into national legislation. On climate change, he had found that an appetite existed to foster an inclusive legal enabling environment that would support the implementation of the NDCs, adaptation plans and climate frameworks. Some countries had specific legislation on climate governance, including legislation that regulated the division of responsibilities among different stakeholders. Many countries had been increasing funding for climate mitigation and adaptation, with some creating national climate change funds. Participatory lawmaking was another important component although it was not that common. Mexico had set up a particularly interesting initiative, namely its open parliament initiative, where youth had been enabled to provide concrete inputs on proposed draft legislation, particularly for the law on climate change.

He sought additional inputs from delegates on the following interrelated areas: (1) methods and tools to mainstream climate change considerations across legislation or to assess interlinkages and compatibility; (2) parliamentary mechanisms for impact analysis of intended targets, including for specific sub-regions or vulnerable populations; (3) legislation that supported the development of specific indicators to assess progress and ensure regular progress reporting; (4) parliamentary initiatives to improve climate change education in general and promote capacity building for key national entities responsible for climate change policies; and (5) parliamentary approaches for the engagement of relevant stakeholders.

*The sitting rose at 13:15.*



## Workshop: Good parliamentary practices to promote interfaith dialogue

### SITTING OF SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER

*The sitting was called to order at 16:00 with Ms. A. Sabaté Gauxachs, Deputy Director of the Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture at Ramon Llull University, in the Chair.*

**The Chair** introduced herself and went on to explain that the Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture at Ramon Llull University in Barcelona was a research centre that focused on media coverage of religious issues. The centre worked directly with various religious communities with a view to bringing research closer to society.

The workshop was an opportunity for participants to engage in dialogue, particularly to listen, share, understand and learn from each other. The setting for the workshop was a very significant one. Indeed, Spain had been a global centre for interreligious coexistence during the Middle Ages and had hosted many historic interfaith and intercultural events in recent times. The legacy of that history was present in the country's cultural heritage and guided the action of all its institutions. Today, Spain was a plural and religiously diverse nation with a consolidated network of religious communities from several different confessions. Those communities were able to practise their faith in communication with the State which worked to guarantee freedom of religion and belief. Spain had also had a crucial role internationally in the creation of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

Dialogue was key to building a harmonious global society. It was important to create inclusive spaces for meaningful interfaith engagement, taking into consideration faith, confession, gender, age and area of expertise, amongst other things. The task, however, was not always easy. Parliaments had not traditionally been part of interfaith dialogue. That said, there were many good examples of parliamentarians engaging in positive interfaith exchanges, including with religious leaders. As a result, the IPU wished to provide a space for more dialogue on the important role of parliaments in promoting peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths and also those of no faith. During the workshop, parliamentarians and experts working in different religious, geographical and cultural contexts would share their insights on the topic. The discussion should be as inclusive and nuanced as possible. She introduced the panellists.

**Mr. K. Kosachev** (Russian Federation), panellist, said that some members of the IPU Eurasia Group were purely Christian while others were purely Muslim. Those religious differences never interfered in the work of the group since its members considered each other to be partners. The same situation existed in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) among former Soviet countries.

The Russian Federation was unique in terms of its experience with interfaith dialogue. There were four "traditional" religions in Russia: Christianity (specifically, the Orthodox Church), Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. All religions were acknowledged as equal, completely accepted by everyone and had no conflict amongst themselves. Russia had never experienced any interreligious war in the whole of its history despite being home to more than 200 different ethnic groups and some 140 languages. According to the Constitution, 20 of the 85 provinces on the territory of Russia were "national republics" inherited by certain ethnic minorities. Each ethnic minority had its own religion, traditions, culture and language all of which were protected under the Constitution. Russia was extremely proud of its multireligious heritage. There was no other country in the world with such a variety of cultures, nationalities, languages and faiths.

Four years ago, the Russian Federation delegation to the IPU had put forward the proposal for a World Conference on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue. The conference had been supported by the IPU and later by the United Nations and would therefore take place under three logos: the IPU, the United Nations and the Russian Federation. An initial decision had been made to hold the conference in St. Petersburg in May 2022. The date had been chosen for two reasons. First, the year 2022 would mark the end of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures. Second, the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was celebrated in the month of May. However, the conference would sadly have to be postponed given the precarious situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the purpose of the conference was to provide a platform for dialogue. Proper dialogue would only be possible if it was held face to face rather than online or in a hybrid format. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation remained enthusiastic about holding the conference and would rearrange it as soon as circumstances permitted. Huge progress had been made in organizing the event and in preparing the preliminary programme. The plan was to invite Heads of State, Speakers of Parliament, nongovernmental institutions and representatives of different religions, amongst others. He hoped that the conference would give Russia the opportunity to show the world how it had managed to successfully achieve peaceful religious coexistence through its legislation and day-to-day practices while other countries continued to struggle.

**Mr. P.S. Rudana** (Indonesia), panellist, said that he had been born and raised in Bali, specifically in the village of Ubud, which was a centre for Balinese art and culture. He wished to begin by reciting a traditional Balinese greeting, *om swastiastu*, which meant “goodness to all from all directions” or “may peace be upon us all.”

Balinese people, who came from a variety of religious backgrounds, had been living together in harmony throughout time. There were a few basic concepts in Balinese culture which promoted harmony and served as a foundation of daily life in Bali. The first concept was *tatvamasi*, which was based on the idea that all human beings were interconnected to one another. The second concept was *tri hita karana*, which promoted three types of harmonious relationships: (1) human to human, (2) human to nature, and (3) human to creator. It actively encouraged tolerance for other people, including people of other religions but also ensured environmental sustainability and a spiritual connection to the universe. He wished to give a few examples of the above concepts in practice. Once a year, Bali celebrated *Nyepi* Day, which was a day of complete silence. The idea was to encourage people to slow down in their exploitation of natural and human resources, giving the earth time to recuperate and the people time to meditate in harmony with the universe. There was also the traditional water management and irrigation system called *subak*, which had been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site. Under *subak*, water flowed from the mountains to the rivers to the sea, directed by gravity, and passing through every rice field along the way. It showed the absolute power of nature and how it could work in synergy with the community, supporting their livelihoods. The system had been in practice since the ninth century.

Bali was one of more than 17,000 islands that made up the Indonesian archipelago. The population of Indonesia was mostly Muslim (86%) but had more than 1,000 ethnic groups that spoke more than 700 languages. Indonesia was therefore a good example of a multicultural society that lived together in harmony. Its multicultural identity was something that Indonesia embraced, as reflected in its motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or “unity in diversity”. Although Indonesians were different in terms of their politics, culture and religion, they considered themselves as one and were able to commit to a democratic system.

In 2012, the House of Representatives had passed a law on preventing social tensions which served as the main umbrella for handling religious conflicts. Currently, it was deliberating on a bill on creating harmony between followers of different religions. The aim of the bill was to protect religious minorities from violence and prevent religious intolerance. The House also had an important role in overseeing a government programme called the Inter-Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB). It was a forum comprised of religious leaders of different faiths which aimed to promote interfaith dialogue, mutual respect, understanding and harmony. Indonesia was keen to play an active part in promoting interfaith dialogue globally and had been engaging in bilateral cooperation with 32 different countries since 2004. It had also been an active contributor to UNAOC having hosted the UNAOC Global Forum in 2014.

As a country, Indonesia had succeeded in building mutual trust and understanding as well as in fostering cooperation between diverse groups of the population. The Indonesian experience confirmed that religion and democracy could coexist. He hoped that Indonesia could inspire others to work together in the name of peace, brotherhood and harmony.

**Mr. D. Verga** (Sovereign Order of Malta), panellist, said that the Sovereign Order of Malta had been founded in Jerusalem in the eleventh century. It was a sovereign subject of international law and a 900-year-old religious institution of the Catholic Church. The Order had a long history of service and a mission to the vulnerable, the marginalized and the sick. From the very beginning, it had been the Order's mission to help those in need and to preserve their dignity regardless of their origin, religious belief or ethnic background. The Order was neutral, impartial and independent and did not pursue any economic or political goal. It was involved in helping hundreds of thousands of people living in crisis situations, such as armed conflict or natural disasters, by providing medical assistance, caring for refugees and migrants, distributing medicines and providing basic equipment for survival. It often worked in partnership with local organizations, many representing different confessions. The humanitarian activities of the Order of Malta were supported by its network of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic missions in over 110 countries. Thirty of those countries were members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) with whom the Order had a longstanding relationship. The Order also had a permanent mission to the United Nations, the European Union and other international organizations.

The Order had a large number of operations in the Middle East. It carried out medical, social and humanitarian projects in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey, including a project to provide medical assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees through mobile medical units, medical centres and field hospitals. It had an integration programme for Iraqi communities displaced during the recent wars, provided education and schooling to child refugees, and supported women who had been traumatized by Daesh. Among the Order's primary goals was advocating for the role of faith-based institutions, facilitating interreligious dialogue, particularly in the Middle East, and promoting international humanitarian law, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

The Order firmly believed that all people of peace and goodwill must come together to face the many challenges affecting modern societies today. The role of religious leaders was key in that endeavour. It was estimated that, by 2015, the global percentage of believers would grow from 84 per cent to 87 per cent. Addressing religious questions was therefore all the more important. Foreign policy and diplomacy were strongly intertwined with religion. Yet, the role of religion in the foreign affairs of States was still relatively unexplored.

The Order was committed to answering the call expressed by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyib in the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* published in 2019. The document made an appeal not for verbal dialogue but for a real dialogue of action. To that end, the Order of Malta had released a compact entitled *Religions in Action* drafted with the contribution of Christian and Muslim leaders. The aim of the compact was to raise awareness of the global geopolitics of religion. The key findings of the compact stemmed from the Order's experience of working in the field. The Order had found that the success of diplomacy in crisis areas depended unmistakably on the capacity of negotiators to engage with religious communities and religious leaders, who could play a key role in conflict resolution and peace building. The compact intended to provide a framework to which religious communities and faith-based organizations could refer to de-escalate tension, reinforce dialogue and deliver aid. The document appealed to the moral values that were universally shared by all faiths, such as compassion and mercy.

**Ms. M. Al Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates), panellist, said that the role of parliament in enhancing interfaith dialogue was very important. The main contribution that parliaments could make was to fight hate speech and enhance peaceful coexistence between different categories of society. There was a need for legislation to combat discrimination and promote tolerance. Parliamentarians must involve different religious leaders in the conversation.

The United Arab Emirates embraced a policy of dialogue, openness, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and human fraternity both nationally and internationally. A number of important measures had been taken. In 2015, the President had issued a decree which criminalized all acts of religious hatred. In 2019, the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* had been signed in Abu Dhabi by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyib. It served as the basis for the country's new strategic pathway, the Principles of 50. The government had also appointed a minister for tolerance and coexistence and launched a national programme for tolerance. The Sawab Centre had been set up to fight the spread of extremist ideas online in addition to the Hedayah Centre, which aimed to foster collaboration and training in the fight against extremism. The United Arab Emirates had also hosted the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Communities and the Joint World Summit of Religions at the Expo 2020 Dubai.

All of the above made the United Arab Emirates a space of peace and security and an example to be followed by others. In 2021, the country had been ranked first in the Gallup Global Law and Order Index and had scored high in eight other international indices related to tolerance and coexistence in 2020.

Parliaments had a responsibility to enhance the citizenship principle, which was currently facing many challenges. In particular, they should raise awareness about digital ethics, including the rights and responsibilities that citizens had online.

**Mr. M. Omar** (Senior Advisor to the IPU Secretary General), panellist, said that the conversation should be about intrafaith dialogue rather than interfaith dialogue. Indeed, there had been no conflicts between religions since the Crusades, which had taken place around 1,000 years ago. Conflicts within religions were, however, very much alive. For example, the atrocities taking place in the Sahel were due to an inherent competitiveness between sects of the same religion.

The philosophy of Islamic coexistence had started to break down. The reason for the breakdown was the misuse of religion itself. People had started to apply a number of misguided concepts which had fuelled hatred. One was *hakimiyyah* or "divine governance" which suggested that God, not the State, was the ultimate authority. Those who did not believe in divine governance were considered non-believers. Another concept was *jahiliyyah* or "the ignorant society" referring to those who did not follow Islam. There was also talk of *dar ul kufr* meaning "the home of the non-believer", namely a non-Islamic society, compared to *dar ul-islam* meaning "the home of Islam", that is an Islamic society. It was causing some people to reject the State in favour of their religion. Lastly, there was the belief that one's real life would begin in the afterlife thus justifying the tactic of suicide bombings against the State. The above concepts were applied by extremist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Boko Harman, Al-Shabaab and even the Taliban. They were, however, misconceptions about Islam.

The concept of citizenship was the best way to resolve the breakdown in Islamic coexistence. Extremist groups had denounced citizenship, maintaining that someone could not be a believer and a citizen at the same time. Citizenship, however, could enhance a sense of belonging and prevent people from feeling that they needed to choose between State and religion. It would also foster equality between religions. Parliaments had a crucial role to play in raising awareness about the importance of citizenship.

**The Chair** said that some key words and phrases that had come out of the discussions were: harmony, diversity, unity in diversity, mutual trust, understanding, brotherhood, peacebuilding, environmental sustainability, the issue of interfaith dialogue versus intrafaith dialogue and citizenship. She wished to ask the panellists a number of follow-up questions. To start, the panellists should clarify the kinds of challenges that existed in reconciling religious identity and citizenship and how those challenges could be addressed.

**Mr. D. Verga** (Sovereign Order of Malta), panellist, said that migration was a challenge linked to the concept of citizenship. It was necessary to address the root causes of migration while adhering to universal values such as respect for human rights and dignity of person, generosity and solidarity when taking care of migrants. One of the ways in which migrants could be empowered was through inclusion. Inclusion was a basic requirement for the holistic development of societies. However, the concept of inclusion had evolved in the context of globalization and new technologies such as mobile phones, the internet, social media and low-cost flights. Governments should implement the necessary legislative, economic, social and educational measures to promote the

inclusion of migrants and refugees while respecting their history, culture and traditions. Dialogue was also needed with the recipients of those measures so that there was a common will to achieve inclusion and mutual understanding. Migration was beneficial for the migrants themselves, for host communities and for communities of origin. However, when poorly managed, it could create significant challenges. Building walls and sealing off borders would not lessen the influx of migrants and was not a long-term solution. The Order of Malta could present many examples of good practices that had facilitated the inclusion of migrants and refugees in Europe and thus created truly harmonious intercultural and interreligious societies.

**Mr. M. Omar** (Senior Advisor to the IPU Secretary General), panellist, said that one of the most significant problems obstructing the reconciliation of religion and citizenship was the misuse and manipulation of religion for political gains. Other challenges included lack of education, poverty and bad governance.

People did not wish to belong to a State that could not provide them with what they needed, such as shelter and income. Instead, they would turn to alternative sources of support, including extremist groups. That was exactly what was happening in the Sahel, Afghanistan and Iraq. The State must play their part in ensuring the needs of the people were met and thus in protecting citizenship. The role of parliamentarians in doing so was particularly important since they were responsible for guarding statehood and the rule of law.

**The Chair** asked the panellists to identify the measures that were needed to strengthen citizenship, the rule of law and statehood with a view to creating strong and resilient multifaith societies.

**Mr. K. Kosachev** (Russian Federation), panellist, said that it was important to avoid double standards. A country that demanded something of another country but did not do the same itself would create conflict and hostility. Russia currently had tense relations with the West which was accusing the country of aggression. It was a clear misunderstanding of the real concerns of Russia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, some 25 million Russians living in certain territories had suddenly become foreigners. They had lost many of their protections in terms of their linguistic, cultural and religious rights. Russia could not afford to leave those people without protection. He called on the European Union (EU), who claimed to be a leader in protecting human rights, to stop using double standards and let Russia protect its citizens.

**Mr. P.S. Rudana** (Indonesia), panellist, said that creating peace and harmony would require countries to promote dialogue, preserve local wisdom, and conserve nature. There were three factors that had contributed to the creation of Indonesia's resilient multifaith society. First, Indonesia offered protection to people of all faiths. The Indonesian State was based on the idea of "faith in one God" which did not refer to any particular religion but included all religions. In addition, the Constitution recognized all religions, promoted religious freedom and guaranteed equal rights to citizens regardless of their faith. It was important to note, however, that the right to religion must be exercised responsibly with respect for the rights of others and without disturbing public order. Second, Indonesian society was based on the national ideology of *pancasila*, which consisted of five principles, including the principle of religion. The national motto of Indonesia, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or "unity in diversity", was embedded into those five principles. Third, the country had put in place a mechanism to maintain interreligious communication and consultation, namely the Interreligious Harmony Forum. Members of Parliament in Indonesia played an active role in promoting multistakeholder dialogue with a view to maintaining a unitary state and promoting tolerance and harmony not only for Indonesia but for the world as a whole.

**Ms. M. Al Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates), panellist, said that the number one factor in creating strong and resilient societies was engaging religious leaders, including in decision-making processes. Religious minorities often felt excluded. They would feel a greater sense of loyalty to the State if that State engaged their leaders.

**The Chair** opened the floor to delegates.

**Mr. M. Agha Tehrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was important to identify what people had in common rather than what divided them. Interfaith and intrafaith dialogue were both needed. Interfaith dialogue was about finding common ground between different religions. It was

the most effective way to promote mutual understanding. The goal of interfaith dialogue was not limited to ensuring coexistence between religions but was also about finding solutions to common problems through mutual understanding. The dialogue should focus on shared goals, such as the goal to overcome global crises. Religions needed to take practical steps to unite and work together on issues such as peaceful coexistence and religious education. They should also work towards drafting a common charter to revive religious life based on undistorted religious values.

Iran had been a leader in promoting dialogue between Islamic communities nationally and internationally. It had held 35 sessions of the International Islamic Unity Conference, established the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought, introduced Islamic Unity Week and set up the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization. Iran had also put forward several initiatives at the United Nations aiming to facilitate dialogue between civilizations and cultures.

Parliaments led by the IPU could play an irreplaceable role in interfaith dialogue. It could be worth considering the idea of establishing a parliament of world religions as a subdivision of the IPU with a view to promoting continuous interreligious dialogue.

**Mr. M. Omar** (Senior Advisor to the IPU Secretary General), panellist, said that Mr. Agha Tehrani had been referring to the idea of a “house of rapprochement”, where people would cooperate based on what they agreed upon and forgive each other for what they disagreed upon. The idea had emerged at a time when a real dialogue existed between Sunnis and Shias. He emphasized that the best way to separate people was to invest in their differences. The World Conference on Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue should be based on the principle of rapprochement.

**Mr. M. Agha Tehrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) agreed that people should pay attention to what unified them. God was the common denominator of all religions since all religions believed in God. It would be possible to unite through the principle of God.

**Ms. N. Arissian** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Syria was a diverse nation with people from many different cultural backgrounds and religions, including Armenians, Syrians, Chaldeans, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Evangelists and Muslims. The Christians and the Muslims had a friendship that could serve as a model for the rest of the world.

The national vision of the country was for the many diverse communities to live together in harmony. Interfaith dialogue, citizenship and equality were priorities for Syria. The Syrian Constitution also guaranteed the protection of cultural diversity.

Terrorism had tried to destroy the harmony that Syria had sought to create but had not succeeded. She called on parliaments to tackle the root causes of terrorism and create a culture of tolerance and dialogue. Parliaments as well as research centres could play a pivotal role in promoting interfaith dialogue and coexistence.

**Mr. V. Dayal Ram** (India) said that many participants had said that all religions led to the same destination. Yet, in practice, there was much hatred among religions, which had in turn led to radicalization. States should engage religious leaders in interfaith dialogue but also leaders from civil society. Civil society was in constant touch with issues affecting the local people and thus could help foster a deeper understanding of those issues. Interfaith dialogue should begin at the college and university level. Teachers and scholars could incorporate teachings about good will and peace into their academic programmes and extracurricular activities. Parliamentarians also had a very important role to play in fostering a culture of interfaith dialogue. It was important for parliamentarians to practise what they preached. There was no doubt that interfaith dialogue was the need of the hour. It was needed between different religions but also between sects of the same religion.

**Mr. M. Kabtouleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that all religions in Syria had come together to rebuild the country after it had been destroyed by extremists. Together, people of all faiths were rebuilding churches and mosques. Everyone was playing their role regardless of their religion. Every religion was considered equal in Syria. He commended the IPU for holding such an important workshop on interfaith dialogue but was disappointed that so few parliamentarians had attended.

**Mr. G. Migliore** (President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)) said that respect and dialogue itself were two key aspects of interreligious dialogue. Dialogue was an encounter between different subjects who confronted each other without giving up their own characteristics or specificities. Instead, dialogue allowed them to mature and gain new self-knowledge in relationship with otherness. By choosing dialogue, multicultural and multiethnic societies would be more likely to foster political and civil peace. Dialogue was a realistic alternative to the clash of civilizations, as described by Samuel Huntington. It could be a bridge between religious communities and a way to overcome stereotypes. Misunderstanding, distance and ignorance often fuelled intolerance and violence.

**Ms. S. Tanus** (Finland) said that she was of the opinion that deep respect towards others as well as freedom of expression should be the basis of interfaith and intrafaith dialogue. She asked the panellists whether they agreed.

**Mr. M. Omar** (Senior Advisor to the IPU Secretary General), panellist, said that it was better to talk about freedom of religion. Freedom of expression was important but should be limited in such a way that people could not insult other religions. Defamation of other religions was not freedom of expression but an attack. The way to secure freedom of religion was through legislation, for instance, by criminalizing hate speech. Parliamentarians had a key role in that regard. People should also have the right to have no religion. It was not religion that was driving the situation in Syria but rather the desire to destroy one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Quoting Ibn Arabi, he encouraged participants to accept people of all religions.

**Ms. M. Al Suwaidi** (United Arab Emirates), panellist, said that freedom of expression was a part of freedom of belief. The United Arab Emirates was a model for freedom of belief. It had more than 200 nationalities living together in harmony with everyone having the freedom to practise their beliefs. Abu Dhabi had a crossroads with a church, a synagogue and a mosque all located in the same area. There were also 75 churches across the country, including one of the busiest Catholic churches in the world. For people to live in harmony, they must be able to coexist in harmony.

**Mr. D. Verga** (Sovereign Order of Malta), panellist, said that freedom of religion must involve the freedom to practise one's own religion. There was a need not only for interfaith dialogue but also for interfaith action. The compact entitled *Religions in Action* was meant to encourage faith leaders and faith-based organization to take action in crisis situations and provide assistance not only to their own people but to all those who needed it, regardless of their religion. Best practices on interfaith dialogue included introducing legislative provisions and rules.

**Mr. P.S. Rudana** (Indonesia), panellist, said that the next IPU Assembly would be held in Bali, Indonesia. It would be a good moment to experience the meaning of true diversity and harmonious coexistence. It was important to showcase the experiences of nations that had succeeded in promoting interfaith dialogue. He agreed that action was needed. Freedom was important but should be reclassified as freedom with responsibility.

**The Chair** urged participants to share their best practices with the IPU Secretariat, which was planning to create a toolkit on the topic of interfaith dialogue.

*The sitting rose at 18:10.*

## **Workshop: *Public engagement in the work of parliaments: Challenges, opportunities and good practices***

**Session jointly organized by the IPU and the ASGP in partnership with UNDP**

**SITTING OF SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER**

(Afternoon)

*The session was called to order at 15:00, with Ms. P. Tyawa (South Africa) in the Chair.*

**The Chair** welcomed participants and outlined the aims of the meeting.

**Mr. A. Richardson** (IPU Secretariat), accompanying his comments with a digital slide presentation, thanked the ASGP for the opportunity to exchange ideas. The IPU and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) were working together to produce the third Global Parliamentary Report (GPR). The report's theme would be public engagement in parliaments, which included: informing the public about parliament's work; educating citizens, including young people, about parliament's role in the democratic system; and new ways of consulting the public when discharging parliament's law-making and oversight duties. The theme was chosen at the last IPU-ASGP meeting (Belgrade, 2019) when participants identified parliaments' greatest current challenges as the public perception of parliament, public trust in parliament, and how to associate the public more closely with parliament's work. Legislatures had been developing new ways of engaging with the public at various levels and intensities for many years. It therefore seemed an opportune moment to discuss past achievements, future change as society develops, and the technology needed to support that change.

Despite the pandemic, the GPR was being drafted on the basis of hundreds of interviews with MPs, parliamentary staff, civil society organizations and others. The report would therefore include many in-depth country-level case studies, as well as recommendations and a practical guide to public engagement. Translation of the report would begin soon, and publication was scheduled for the next IPU Assembly (March 2022).

The report would address the following topics identified during research interviews: how to build support and commitment for parliamentary work among the public; how to ensure the public had equal access to decision-makers and parliamentary structures, regardless of factors such as one's existing level of parliamentary know-how, influence or funding, or one's gender or physical distance from parliament; how parliaments could keep up with technological change and harness it most effectively to interact with the public; how to engage seriously with young people and develop current youth initiatives so that young people were most likely to engage with their parliament and its processes over the long term; how to set objectives for public engagement, evaluate the extent to which they had been achieved, and identify both successes and the changes needed to improve or evolve. Other topics covered in the report would include leaving no one behind, being open to innovation, learning from one another and other forms of exchange.

The GPR would be composed of: an introduction charting the future of engagement; and five chapters covering why engagement mattered, how parliaments were engaging, key trends and areas for improvement, strategic topics for engagement, and the future focus of engagement. The report's most important aim was to be a practical document whose recommendations would have a tangible impact in supporting parliaments as they strengthened, extended and improved their engagement methods with different sections of the public.

In 2022 therefore, the IPU, in partnership with UNDP and others, would work on the crucial issue of the political will to engage by: raising awareness among MPs, Secretaries General and parliamentary staff; establishing networks for regularly exchanging experiences; and answering expressions of interest from parliaments keen to progress further on engagement.

A GPR launch event was scheduled for March 2022, after which all parliaments would be invited to organize a presentation of the report in their own country. An online network was soon to be established that would connect staff in different parliaments who were responsible for developing education programmes, participatory initiatives and community engagement tools. Members of that network would be responsible for consultation and education programmes. The IPU would continue conversations with network members throughout 2022 and beyond through webinars, as well as offers of assistance to assess a parliament's current situation and identify priorities for improvement. He encouraged participants to send to the IPU the contact details of staff who would be network members in their own parliaments.



**Mr. C. Chauvel** (Global Lead and Asia-Pacific Focal Point, Inclusive Processes and Institutions, UNDP), speaking via video link from Bangkok, said that UNDP's remit to work on governance issues was the reason for its joint work with the IPU on the GPR. Without good governance, sustainable human development could not be achieved. Effective and inclusive parliaments that held the executive to account for delivering the Sustainable Development Goals were an integral part of UNDP's mission to ensure such development.

According to feedback from the 65 parliaments with which UNDP worked, the first two GPRs had been of great use in bringing about changes to documents such as rules of procedure, standing orders, and parts of the constitution in certain cases. The focus of the third GPR on engagement was particularly welcome as it would include many of UNDP's national-level stakeholders, such as civil society, executive government, independent oversight institutions, the judiciary and law enforcement bodies.

Several years ago, he had written a speech analysing ways in which non-traditional forms of governance were developing new communication methods with people that traditional institutions were failing to reach via more standard routes, such as calling for submissions from the public on a given topic. Advances in technology and generational changes in what was expected of parliaments meant that, instead of *submitting* to parliament, the public sought ongoing interaction, communication and validation of the democratic process. For many MPs, making that change was a challenge. Through the working group established for the GPR, many inspiring examples of community interaction with parliament had been contributed from UNDP country programmes. The examples went beyond the traditional reality of submissions or standard electoral cycles, and would hopefully help to rejuvenate democracy and governance-related interactions between rights bearers and duty holders.

**The Chair** invited participants to reflect on how inclusive their parliaments might be, whether they engaged the public in a relevant way, and what levels of public trust in parliament existed.

**A representative of India** highlighted the importance of public education, consultation and involvement in decision-making. He posited democratic governance as the most successful political experiment in human history. On the basis that power sprang from the people, citizen participation was intrinsic to democracy, while citizens' expectations of their representatives continued to rise. Balancing legislative duties with representing the views and interests of constituents continued to be a key challenge for MPs. Managing constituents' expectations was also important, even before taking office during the campaign period, when manifestos were published and commitments made.

In India, there were a number of parliamentary procedures by which MPs could draw attention to constituents' concerns and hold the government to account, including: asking the government a parliamentary question; calling attention to an issue via a parliamentary discussion of up to 90 minutes; and leading a discussion of between two and four hours. All bills introduced into parliament were accompanied by briefs explaining the nuances of the legislation to MPs and the public.

Regarding consultation, each Bill introduced into parliament was scrutinized by a relevant parliamentary committee. Public invitations to comment on draft legislation were issued in the press by each committee whenever it considered new provisions. Efforts were made to gather views from different sections of society by targeting different areas of the country. Citizens of all kinds could also give feedback on legislation or government policy statements through India's parliamentary television channel.

**The Chair** asked participants for their views on public trust in parliament: to what extent did parliaments inspire trust in the way they communicated, interacted or involved the public in law-making and ensuring oversight?

**A representative of Peru** said that Peruvian citizens were always posing questions about the work of parliament. He asked how the low approval ratings of parliaments recorded in many places could be improved. Part of the answer lay in trusting citizens and remaining close to them, including by visiting hard-to-access areas or communities who were not traditionally consulted. Listening to constituents' concerns and acting to solve their problems would help to improve the image of parliaments.

**Mr. M. Bin Madi** (Yemen) said that, in the past, when an elector had cast their vote, they had been putting their trust in a particular candidate and entrusting them with legislative responsibilities. Recently though, new technologies had required parliamentarians to interact with the people. Although progress had been made, war had unfortunately prevented Yemeni MPs from fully engaging with constituents. He expressed the hope that the war would end swiftly, and that elected officials would soon be able to meet the public engagement standards expected of them.

**Mr. L. Laurence Smyth** (United Kingdom) said that many women in the UK had been dissatisfied with the medical treatment they had received when experiencing the menopause. One MP had campaigned to improve the situation. However, public petitions had proved to be a most effective way to raise the issue, which had never been discussed in parliament. The petitions had led to a debate in the House of Commons where the issue had enjoyed bipartisan support. After the debate, the Government had promised to cut the cost of hormone replacement therapy prescriptions, as they had become an economic barrier for some. The Government had also promised to establish a task force to examine how employers could be more understanding of women during the menopause. Without the public petitions, the question would probably not have been debated by parliament. The petitions had enabled women who had been suffering to demonstrate that many others shared their concerns. The example demonstrated how public engagement could lead to practical action.

**The Chair** noted the positive effects that could result from educating parliamentarians about their responsibilities to be in constant consultation with constituents, as well as from educating the public about how to access parliament to represent their interests, and how people's individual needs could be brought to light using parliamentary systems.

**A representative of Bahrain** said that the Bahraini Parliament provided central funding for MPs' offices and staff in their constituencies. Given the different reasons for public communication, it was more effective for MPs to set their own public communication plans on the ground, rather than all communications being directed by the Secretary General. MPs could then tailor their communication style to constituents' needs, and decide on logistics such as office opening hours.

**The Chair** asked participants the extent to which various sectors of society, particularly women, had access to parliament and found parliament supportive of their needs.

**A representative of India** said that, as women made up half of society, no one could afford to ignore them. The Parliament of India had a women's empowerment committee that could discuss any issue as it saw fit. For women outside parliament, there was also provision to support their financial inclusion, and many women's self-help groups had been formed to support all levels of society. Moreover, when women-focused legislation was debated, women were closely consulted, either in parliament or during outreach visits. Women were also involved in debating other issues.

**Mr. A. Richardson** (IPU Secretariat) asked participants what steps (if any) were taken to ensure parliaments heard from different sectors of society, particularly women and men, or from people who were specifically concerned with an issue being debated. Did parliaments have any information about the types of people who typically took part in consultations, including their gender and their level of power and influence in society?

**Ms. S. Kauvee** (Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum) said that she was aware of guidelines advising consultation organizers to avoid inadvertently excluding sections of society through, for example, scheduling public hearings at particular times of day. She asked whether disaggregated data was available on who attended public hearings so that the effect of such guidelines could be assessed.

**The Chair**, speaking in her capacity as an official of the South African Parliament, said that that country's legislature organized sectoral parliaments to encourage people to become involved in subjects relevant to their lives. For example, all parliamentary business in June was dedicated to youth issues and was known as the youth parliament, while August was dedicated to women and dubbed the women's parliament. Events might include presentations from government departments explaining their use of the budget dedicated to youth, women's or other relevant issues. The parliament then drew on various data to assess levels of public satisfaction with the arrangements for sectoral parliaments.

**A representative of Bahrain** said that issues taken up by MPs tended to reflect the opinions of those they represented. Many MPs used social media to encourage constituents to express their opinions on topics under discussion. Draft laws were also published for a period of public consultation. Projects and policies introduced by the government were informed by the views of civil society organizations that represented the relevant sector of society.

**Ms. R.A. Barbarán Reyes** (Peru) said that there were different levels of public participation in her country. For example, online participation platforms enabled people to debate how a municipal budget should be spent, and which issues local authorities should prioritize. Similarly, all bills introduced into the national Congress were published on a portal allowing citizens to comment on the draft legislation. Parliamentary committees also ran *citizens' working tables* to which people with specific interests, such as women's rights, could be invited to debate relevant topics. That sectoral approach could yield different results compared to consultation with the general public.

A significant challenge of Peruvian politics always arose when the President and the party with a parliamentary majority came from different political persuasions. She asked what solutions other countries had found in similar situations and whether they could offer any guidance.

Remaining in touch with one's constituents was paramount, which was why Peruvian MPs spent one week in their constituencies every month.

**A representative of Peru** said that, in the 1990s, there had been 240 congresspeople to represent a population of around 12 million. By contrast, there were currently 130 parliamentarians representing 33 million citizens. As each MP represented over 250,000 constituents, giving a voice to each one of them was one of the most significant challenges for Peruvian MPs.

In terms of encouraging public involvement with draft laws, all parliamentary committees in the Peruvian Parliament had structures to encourage the public, particularly through civil society organizations, to comment on bills currently before the legislature. That allowed MPs to legislate on the basis of views that came directly from the electorate. He was keen to find out how other participants had approached similar issues.

**The Chair** said the discussion proved parliaments' dedication to engaging meaningfully and giving citizens access to parliamentary processes.

She invited the IPU to discuss the tools and methodologies that parliaments were using or could deploy effectively in expanding their efforts to inform, educate and consult the public. Those tools were designed to ensure citizens' involvement in law-making, the full engagement of MPs with those who elected them, and the fulfilment of campaign and manifesto promises.

**Mr. A. Richardson** (IPU Secretariat) said that, as elected representatives of the people, parliamentarians were responsible for engaging with voters, explaining how parliament functioned, and including citizens' views in parliamentary decision-making. He asked how parliamentary staff helped MPs fulfil those responsibilities through the tools, systems and services they provided, particularly where systems could not be run by individual MPs, such as e-petition platforms. As a number of parliaments had now set up petition systems, he asked participants how they were developing their individual arrangements, and whether the potential for technology to increase the number of people who could take part in a petition had simplified or complicated matters.

When researching the GPR, the IPU had found that parliaments were increasingly inviting the public to comment on draft legislation through online platforms. He noted the challenges of engendering widespread uptake of the chance to comment on material placed online, despite the accessibility advantages of web-based platforms. He asked participants which approaches they had found most effective in encouraging voters to visit and interact with parliamentary online spaces.

Citizens assemblies were also being developed in some countries. The assemblies were composed of ordinary members of the public drawn at random who debated and discussed public policy issues of importance to their society. The aim was to generate policy proposals that came from the people and that could be developed further in parliament. As citizens assemblies were relatively new, he asked participants whether they had experienced them, and whether they felt similar systems might be useful in their own parliamentary and social contexts.

**Mr. M. Tiwari** (India) said that the Indian Parliament's committee on petitions received various representations from citizens and could launch enquiries as it saw fit. As a result of the pandemic, petitions could now be submitted by email rather than by a petitioner's physical appearance before the committee.

Opportunities for consultation on draft legislation were widespread. For example, draft bills were published online for 30 days to enable public comment. The draft was then examined closely by parliamentary committees, during which further public consultation was possible. It was also important for citizens to comment on subordinate legislation. While primary legislation tended to deal with overarching principles in briefer form, subordinate legislation could run to thousands of pages of text that could affect citizens' daily lives. Therefore public awareness was raised through media activity, and committees examining subordinate legislation consulted interested groups throughout the whole of society. The value of such consultation had been demonstrated when regulations about citizens' rights to information had been amended on the basis of suggestions received during an online consultation.

The Indian Parliament organized parliamentary moots at schools and other locations to involve both students and the general public in topical debates. The parliamentary museum also gave people the chance to experience the atmosphere in which issues were discussed in parliament.

**The Chair** said that, although various methods of engagement were used in different parliaments, there appeared to be agreement that all parliamentary staff should continuously assist MPs to engage with the citizens who had elected them to office. The GPR offered a wide variety of material to aid such efforts.

**Ms. K. Jabre** (IPU Secretariat) thanked participants for the rich debate and the diversity of views expressed. The discussions appeared to confirm that public engagement was a top priority for MPs and parliamentary staff. Although it posed challenges, engagement was recognized as a necessary way to increase parliaments' relevance and efficiency. Examples had been shared of the positive impact that could flow from incorporating citizens' ideas. Public consultation offered many further opportunities to investigate and experiment with new approaches.

The experiences shared demonstrated that parliaments were united in their commitment to meaningful consultation. By including a wide diversity of voices, discussions could result in changes to public policy that made a difference.

The GPR would be a useful source of practical ideas as it contained a wealth of practices from around the world. She expressed the hope that the report would not end up as an untouched volume on a shelf, but rather a vibrant tool to help parliaments test and advance ideas, share practices and innovate differently. She encouraged all participants to disseminate the GPR widely, organize launch events and discussion forums on specific aspects of the report, and to provide feedback to the IPU on what had been tested and learned as a result of the GPR's proposals.

The IPU was always at the disposal of parliaments to support them in launching the report and making use of its recommendations. The GPR drew from the lived experiences of parliaments and could be further enriched based on parliaments' future exploits. The IPU looked forward to maintaining the report as a living and relevant resource.

*The session rose at 16:20.*

## Adoption of resolutions, final documents and reports

### SITTING OF TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER

(Afternoon)

*The sitting was called to order at 17:30 with Ms. M. Batet Lamaña, President of the Spanish Parliament and President of the 143rd Assembly, in the Chair.*

#### Item 3 of the agenda

#### **Madrid Declaration on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community* (General Debate)**

**The Chair** said that substantive and robust deliberations had taken place during the General Debate. There had been interventions from over 100 national parliaments and over a dozen partner organizations. The final outcome document was the Madrid Declaration *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*. The Madrid Declaration sought to capture the key messages from the deliberations and identify concrete avenues for parliamentary action going forward. She invited the IPU President to introduce the Declaration.

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that the Madrid Declaration sought to capture the contributions that Members had made during the General Debate. The Declaration highlighted the need for parliaments to find new approaches to politics, counter disinformation and hate speech, reduce polarization, connect people with their democratic institutions and lead in times of crisis.

*The Declaration was endorsed by the Assembly.*

#### Item 4 of the agenda

#### ***Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*** (Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights) (A/143/4-DR)

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands), co-Rapporteur, said that the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights had approved a topic for its next resolution to be discussed at the next 144th Assembly, namely *Parliamentary impetus to local and regional development of countries with high levels of international migration and to stopping all forms, including state-sponsored, of human trafficking and human rights abuses*. There had also been a proposal for a debate on the theme *The role of parliaments in reconciling health measures during a pandemic with the preservation of civil liberties*. Lastly, two workshops would also be organized: one on female genital mutilation and another on artificial intelligence.

The online world had many advantages but also many downsides. One of those downsides was online sexual child abuse. As a result, two years ago, she had proposed a resolution entitled *Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*. The Committee had held a debate on the topic with inputs from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children and ECPAT International. A draft resolution had then been produced by the three rapporteurs, namely herself, Mr. P. Limjaoenrat (Thailand) and Ms. J. Oduol (Kenya), who had worked with great passion and devotion. A total of 80 amendments had been considered resulting in a resolution which balanced the rights of the child with the right to online privacy. She called on the IPU to provide a guidebook containing best practices on the topic. The resolution should be used as a starting point for further work. It would only be possible to combat the problem through the shared commitment of parliamentarians.

*The resolution was unanimously adopted.*

Item 5 of the agenda**Reports of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security; Standing Committee on Sustainable Development; and Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs**

**Mr. J.I. Echániz** (Spain), acting President of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, said that his Committee had conducted two very important activities on 28 and 29 November, namely an expert hearing and a panel discussion.

The expert hearing had been held on the theme of the next resolution: *Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace*. Four different experts had taken the floor to provide their perspectives before the debate had been opened up to Members. The two co-Rapporteurs had also presented their initial ideas for the resolution. It was high time to have a resolution on the role of parliaments in peace processes. Signing peace agreements did not necessarily guarantee that peace would be established. Indeed, the world was currently having to deal with the consequences of failed peace processes. A one-size-fits-all approach was not sufficient. It was very important to consider local contexts, including history and languages. Participants had highlighted the need for peace processes to be inclusive of all, including women, young people and indigenous communities. There was a general consensus that peace processes would not last unless they went in hand with training, education and other measures to prevent social tension.

In addition, a panel discussion had been held on the theme *Parliament's role in addressing the risks of diversion in arms transfers*. Members had been shown a video message from the President of the Seventh Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. Three other experts had also spoken, offering three different points of view but ultimately agreeing on the fact that illicit flows of weapons were giving rise to mass killings across the planet. Members had agreed that parliaments must take action to end armed violence by translating the international legal framework into national laws. National laws must tackle the root causes of the problem and put sufficient controls in place. International sanctions should be administered against traffickers, sellers and buyers of arms. There was also a need to establish a unified and universally valid definition of arms diversion. Participants had welcomed the new publication entitled *Assuring our common future: A guide to parliamentary action in support of disarmament for security and sustainable development* which set out many useful parliamentary practices.

With regard to internal affairs, the Bureau had met to discuss the new IPU Strategy 2022-2026 as well as the work plan of the Committee. The Committee had agreed to devote all its time at the 144th Assembly to the drafting of the next resolution. Elections had also been held in which the Committee had elected Mr. M. Al-Ahbab (Qatar) as the new President and Ms. H. Hakobyan (Armenia) as the new Vice-President. He thanked the IPU, its Members and partners for the support he had received during his four-year presidency of the Committee.

*The Assembly took note of the report.*

**Mr. W. William** (Seychelles), acting President of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, said that his Committee had held two sittings on 27 and 29 November. In its first sitting, the Committee had a launch of a new IPU tool entitled *Guidelines for parliamentarians on budgeting for the SDGs: Making the most of public resources*. It had then engaged in a debate on the topic of the next resolution, namely *Leveraging Information and Communication Technology as an enabler for the education sector, including in times of pandemic*. The key themes had been introduced by a representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Several international instruments existed to ensure education was inclusive, equitable and ethical yet digital inequalities in education persisted. The COVID-19 pandemic had revealed the extent of the digital divide within and among countries. The co-Rapporteurs from Finland and India had also provided their views on the topic noting that, even before the pandemic, there were educational gaps across the globe. Parliamentarians must act to bridge the divide nationally, regionally and globally.

In its second sitting, the Committee had held a panel discussion entitled *Impact of climate change on natural resources: How can parliaments ensure inclusive water access and availability?* Members had heard expert contributions from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The experts had stressed that climate change was expected to complicate the management of land and water resources as well as to threaten food security. Interventions from Members had put emphasis on access to clean water as a human right and stressed the importance of transboundary cooperation in the management of natural resources to ensure equitable access and distribution. The Committee had elected its next President and Vice-President and filled the remaining vacancies on the Bureau. It had also adopted a work plan for the next Assembly, agreeing to dedicate all its time to drafting of the next resolution.

The Bureau of the Committee had also held a meeting in which it had heard a presentation about the new IPU Strategy. The Bureau had welcomed the idea to adopt an IPU-wide climate change policy, starting by understanding the carbon footprint of internal activities and leveraging technology to reduce emissions in the foreseeable future. It was also in favour of developing a tool kit to further assist parliamentarians in their efforts to pass policies and laws on climate change.

*The Assembly took note of the report.*

**Mr. P. Katjavivi** (Namibia), acting President of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, said that the Committee had met on 29 November. The session had consisted of two panel discussions. The first panel had been entitled *The global vaccination campaign to end the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons from the WHO and WTO* and had featured representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). A total of 34 parliamentary delegations had attended and 14 Members had taken the floor. Members had been fundamentally supportive of the response of the WHO and UNAIDS to the pandemic but had drawn attention to several gaps in the broader multilateral response that required urgent attention. The experts had been unanimous in encouraging parliamentarians to make general use of the flexibilities in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and in calling for more transparency in government purchasing contracts related to vaccines from private producers. The need for greater global solidarity had been stressed repeatedly. With only one exception, Members had spoken in support of the patent waiver under TRIPS. Several parliamentarians had addressed the need to combat the spread of vaccine misinformation on social media which must be countered with facts-based public information campaigns while respecting the right to free speech.

The second panel discussion had been entitled *The UN Secretary-General's Report on Our Common Agenda* and had featured a policy advisor from the Office of the UN Secretary-General. The UN Secretary-General's Report on Our Common Agenda provided some 90 recommendations on how the international community could work together in response to multiple threats to world peace and sustainability, including climate change, the current pandemic, growing inequalities and rising conflicts. The Report invited governments, parliaments, civil society and other actors to break their pattern of business as usual and embark on a new course of action that provided real answers to the people and restored their faith in government and in the international community. Ten parliamentarians had spoken during the session. They had emphasized the key role of parliaments in implementing international agreements such as the Common Agenda through their representative, oversight and legislative functions. Speakers had generally recognized the importance of multilateral solutions in an increasingly interdependent world. Parliaments could contribute to United Nations processes and multilateralism by setting up all-party parliamentary groups on United Nations affairs. Members of parliament could support international solidarity by avoiding fearmongering and knee-jerk responses against other countries.

Lastly, the Committee had elected four new members to the Bureau: Ms H. Tigranyan (Armenia), Ms. C.I. López Castro (Mexico), Ms. E. Qatrawi (Moldova) and Ms. E. Lindh (Sweden). It had also elected Ms. S.A. Noor (Kenya) as President and Mr. L. Wehrli (Switzerland) as Vice-President.

*The Assembly took note of the report.*

#### Item 6 of the agenda

#### **Approval of the subject item for the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights of the 145th IPU Assembly and appointment of the Rapporteurs (A/143/6-R.1)**

**The Chair** said that the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights was proposing the following theme for its next resolution: *Parliamentary impetus to local and regional development of countries with high levels of international migration and to stopping all forms, including state-sponsored, of human trafficking and human rights abuses*. Three co-Rapporteurs had been nominated to draft the resolution, namely Mr. J. Wadephul (Germany), Mr. F. Zon (Indonesia), Ms. S. Nane (Uruguay).

The Chair took it that the Assembly wished to approve the theme of the resolution as well as the nominations.

*It was so agreed.*

**Any other business**

**Ms. P. Maharani** (Indonesia) said that the Parliament of Indonesia would host the 144th IPU Assembly from 20 to 24 March 2022. The Assembly would be an opportunity to perform a reality check on the measures taken thus far to recover from the pandemic. Members might wish to examine whether the global vaccination programme was on track to reaching its targets. They might wish to assess the social and economic impact of the pandemic. They might also wish to consider the impact of the pandemic on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Parliaments must send a strong signal showing that they were ready to find solutions to the most pressing challenges of the time. Indonesia had made great progress in tackling the pandemic and was hoping to vaccinate 100 per cent of its population by March 2022. She looked forward to welcoming delegates to Indonesia.

*A video was played welcoming delegates to Indonesia for the 144<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly.*



## Closure of the Assembly

**Mr. K.B. Abdullahi** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, thanked the Spanish Government and Parliament for their hospitality as well as the IPU President, the IPU Secretary General and the IPU Members, particularly those Members who had contributed to the success of the emergency item. He encouraged those countries that had not paid their funding contributions to do so as soon as possible.

**Mr. A. Al Nuaimi** (United Arab Emirates), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, thanked all those who had contributed to the success of the Assembly, including the Spanish Parliament, the IPU President and the IPU Secretariat. The Spanish Parliament had shown great courage in hosting the Assembly in such difficult times. He reiterated his full commitment to the new IPU Strategy and praised the consensus reached on the emergency item. Parliaments should focus more on common priorities and values in order to promote democracy and diplomacy.

**Mr. B. Mahtab** (India), speaking on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, commended the Government and Parliament of Spain as well as the IPU for successfully organizing an in-person Assembly amidst COVID-19 restrictions in the space of only three months. It had been a historic feat and a great story of human endeavour. The Assembly had demonstrated an exemplary show of solidarity to mobilize parliamentary cooperation in the face of challenges posed by the pandemic. The consensus reached for the emergency item in support of vaccine equity highlighted the willingness and determination of parliaments across the globe to stand together in such extraordinary times. He was hopeful that the discussions held at the Assembly would contribute to the future work of all parliamentarians.

**Mr. M. Yerman** (Kazakhstan), speaking on behalf of the Eurasia Group, said that the Assembly had successfully completed its work. Delegates had gathered together despite the pandemic to discuss important issues such as the role of parliaments in the modern world, the expansion of opportunities for women and youth, ecology and stable growth. All of those issues had been reflected in the new IPU Strategy. Meaningful discussions had also taken place at the meetings of the geopolitical groups. The Eurasia Group had elected a representative of Kazakhstan as its new Chair. He congratulated the Secretary General on his re-election and thanked Spain for its kind hospitality. The common mission of the IPU Members would continue during future meetings.

**Mr. B. Llano** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC), thanked the Speaker of the Spanish Parliament and her team for organizing such a successful Assembly. He also thanked the IPU President and the Secretary General for always being willing to listen to Members. It was important to highlight good points but also to offer constructive criticism on where the Organization could improve. The Assembly would not have been possible without the donations of some key Member Parliaments, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, China and Switzerland. Twelve delegations from GRULAC had attended the Assembly.

**Ms. A. Gerkens** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group, thanked Spain for hosting the Assembly and for showing the world that parliamentarians could meet during the pandemic. She also thanked the IPU President. It had been largely thanks to him that the Assembly had been able to take place given his ability to unite people. Lastly, she thanked the Secretary General for his ongoing and stable contribution to the Organization. The Secretary General had proved that democracy could continue to operate even in times of pandemic. She was confident that the IPU would be very much needed going forward.

**Mr. D. Pacheco** (Portugal), President of the IPU, said that the 143rd IPU Assembly had completed its work. Despite doubts and reservations, the Assembly had been able to go ahead thanks to the drive and commitment of everyone involved. He thanked all those who had contributed to its success, particularly Spain. More than 1,000 parliamentarians from 120 countries had taken part, gathering not only to talk but also to give hope. Parliamentarians had demonstrated that it was possible to continue working in such difficult times.

Over the course of the Assembly, participants had formed partnerships, built coalitions of support and taken action on different issues such as economic recovery, climate change, multilateralism and democracy. There had been many positive outcomes. The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security had discussed ways to reshape peace processes. The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development had debated the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a means of strengthening the education sector. The Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights had approved an important resolution, *Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse*. The Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs had looked at ways to take forward the global COVID-19 vaccination campaign. The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had also met with a view to defending parliamentarians around the world while the Forums had discussed issues related to gender equality and youth participation. Lastly, the Assembly had approved the Madrid Declaration.

There were many challenges to democracy and the war against them must be won. Parliamentarians must take action on the commitments they had made during the Assembly. The IPU was very well positioned to adapt and function in such troubled times. Its mission and values were essential globally, regionally and nationally. He encouraged parliamentarians to work together in their efforts to create a better world, underscoring that they would always have the support of the IPU.

**The Chair** thanked participants for their words of recognition, affection and gratitude. The 143rd IPU Assembly had come to an end. She had been very proud to preside over it. The Assembly had shown itself to be very capable of addressing contemporary issues.

One of the successes of the Assembly had been the work of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. The Forum had held its 32nd session during the Assembly in which 200 people had participated, including 86 women parliamentarians and 28 men. The Forum had been a pioneer in pushing for gender equality, stressing, in particular, the fact that gender equality concerned both men and women. Indeed, the question of whether men and women were equally engaged on gender equality had been the topic of an inspiring parity debate. She thanked all the men who had shown support for gender equality, including the IPU President and Secretary General.

Another success of the Assembly had been the General Debate on the theme *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*. She was reassured to see that the outcome document contained emphatic statements such as the following: “Politics that was founded on confrontation and division undermines the legitimacy of the system as a whole” and “We reaffirm that political compromise is a core of the democratic process and believe that the ability to reach agreements, cooperate across political divides and prioritize public interests over party politics contributes to depolarization and sustainable social peace.” Each and every parliamentarian was responsible for ensuring political integration and agreement building. It was important that they created spaces where different political players could meet with citizens of diverse political beliefs. The defence of democracy lay within the hands of parliamentarians.

She thanked delegates for participating in the Assembly.

*The Chair was presented with a gift.*

*The sitting rose at 18:50.*

## Madrid Declaration

### *Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community*

*Endorsed by the 143rd IPU Assembly  
(Madrid, 30 November 2021)*

As members of parliaments and representatives of the people, we have an overriding responsibility to serve our communities through a system of democratic governance where every voice counts. The world is striving to overcome a wide array of challenges created by social, political, economic and health-related upheavals. Societal divides and the deterioration of social peace are having an impact on the state of democracy, and in particular on the institutions that put democratic values into practice.

In the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world's governments committed to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. As parliaments, we share the commitment to achieving those objectives.

In doing so, we will strengthen democracy at the national and global levels. We are convinced that overcoming social divisions, uniting instead of dividing, fostering hope not hate, joining forces and seeking common ground are vital to addressing the contemporary challenges to democracy.

These challenges are numerous. A growing perception that the political establishment is losing touch with the population has fuelled the rise of populism and deepened societal divides. Decreasing trust in political systems, rising economic gaps, structural inequalities, growing disengagement and increasing polarization are being experienced around the world. Young people under 30 make up about half of the world's population but are disproportionately absent from the decision-making process. As today's young people become tomorrow's adults, failure to engage with them meaningfully will further undermine the cohesion of our societies.

Technological advancements such as social media have made incredible contributions to public access to information and new forms of exchange. However, the same tools have also facilitated the flow of disinformation, spreading anger and frustration and impacting the very fabric of society. In the context of the global pandemic, they have in some instances been used to undermine scientific evidence and national vaccination campaigns, with a negative impact on public health. They are all too easily harnessed as tools to intentionally sow mistrust and spread hate. Sexist hate speech and online harassment affect women in particular, as a means of questioning their legitimacy and their right to take part in the democratic process.

Polarization and populism are not new concepts, but the current context provides the conditions for them to flourish. The level of polarization has reached new heights. Partisan competition is normal and healthy, but intense polarization carries significant risks. It penetrates society as a whole, affecting everyday interactions. It has the potential to damage the culture of tolerance, increase conflict and widen distrust. It can also severely undermine the effectiveness of our democratic institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated existing challenges, affecting democratic processes, leading to questioning of evidence-based decision-making, and ultimately challenging the ability of the democratic model to cope with and recover from emergencies.

#### **Towards new approaches to politics**

Politics that is founded on confrontation and division undermines the legitimacy of the system as a whole. We are concerned that increased polarization reduces the opportunities to build broad coalitions in society and implement bold public policies to address urgent issues such as climate change.

Addressing the contemporary challenges to democracy requires a concerted effort by us all. Political leadership and solidarity are vital as we seek new approaches to politics. Our response must be based on a renewed commitment to our core democratic values, inclusiveness and problem-solving through dialogue and an evidence-based approach.

**Countering disinformation and hate speech**

Legislative and policy measures are needed in order to strengthen democratic resilience and create a vibrant information ecosystem, which contributes to democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights. In our parliaments, we must be vigilant to threats to civic space and resolute in our defence of freedom of expression and the diversity of views, while at the same time countering disinformation and combatting online harm.

Democracies need informed citizens with a solid understanding of how democracy works and the skills to participate in it. Just as we vaccinate our citizens against the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to build immunity against disinformation and attempts to manipulate public opinion. We need to invest in media literacy and civic education at all ages and for all sectors of society, in order to ensure that our populations are well-informed and equipped with critical thinking skills.

We recognize the important role of the media and journalists as sources of information and an essential part of free and open societies. Underlying economic shifts threaten the sustainability of independent journalism at local and national levels. We must explore new models that protect the diversity of views and critical perspectives in the media.

Both traditional media and social media outlets bear responsibility for ensuring differing views can be expressed without fear of reprisals or harassment. Respect for diversity must be fostered by those who inform and facilitate public debate. As parliamentarians, we must create the conditions for free speech while protecting those who take part in public debate from any form of violence, sexism and harassment, including online.

We are cognizant of the key role of the private sector in driving innovation and technological change. At the same time, we cannot stand by while power accumulates in the hands of a small number of online platforms. We must engage in a constructive multi-stakeholder dialogue and find appropriate regulatory responses. The underlying business model of social media platforms is based on engagement and popularity, and tends to reward polemic and emotion. An open and inclusive dialogue could accelerate the reassessment of the current approach in favour of a more human-centred model, which furthermore would protect private data.

**Reducing polarization**

The underlying factors of polarization, such as growing economic gaps and inequalities, the exclusion of some societal groups from political discourse and the disruption of the media industry through technological advancement, can only be overcome if there is a strong political will.

A core function of the parliamentary ecosystem is to promote trust in democracy and reinforce the relevance of representative institutions. Effective political systems and parliamentarians promote a culture of cooperation and dialogue to surmount divisions, build inclusive societies and promote trust.

Political leaders and elected officials bear responsibility for demonstrating respect for democratic values in their words and actions. Wider societal coherence can be built by avoiding poisonous rhetoric, demonstrating a willingness to cooperate across party lines and promoting evidence-based decision-making. Parliamentarians, both men and women, must play their part in countering polarization by creating spaces in parliament for cross-party dialogue. Women's caucuses often set a positive example of how party divides can be bridged and how legislative work can be less hostile and more evidence-based. There is a need for similar approaches throughout parliaments.

Political parties must also play their part in winning back public trust in democratic systems and building strong institutions, by being more socially representative and responsive, and delivering on their electoral promises.

We reaffirm that political compromise is a core of the democratic process and believe that the ability to reach agreements, cooperate across political divides and prioritize public interests over party politics contributes to de-polarization and sustainable social peace.

Parliaments must create the conditions for all voices to be heard within the institution, including all political views, whether majority or opposition. Internal policies must ensure balanced participation, bearing in mind diversity – whether based on political affiliation, gender, age or otherwise – as well as zero tolerance towards disrespectful, discriminatory and sexist speech or behaviour within parliament.

Parliaments must support or lead efforts to promote the use of evidence in policy making, for example by reinforcing national statistical capacities, encouraging independent sources of research and analysis, and developing methodologies for public consultation so that the views of the people most directly concerned by legislation and policy can be taken into account. In their own work, parliaments must develop close links with academic institutions in order to improve access to the best available scientific information, for example on climate change. Parliaments must also invest in the capacity of their own parliamentary research services to provide non-partisan research and support to all parliamentarians.

### **Connecting people with their democratic institutions**

For democratic systems to work, people must have the opportunities and the will to participate in them. Maintaining trust in parliamentary democracy requires regular interaction between governing bodies and the public. We must foster meaningful public engagement in the work of parliament that builds confidence and helps people see their interests reflected in policy. We are convinced of the need to embed a culture of engagement across our parliaments for a united and concerted effort towards broader and deeper public participation.

Public engagement also contributes to inclusive decision-making. We must work towards a more inclusive form of politics, making strong connections between parliaments and a diverse range of communities, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Parliaments have a responsibility to be more representative, including of women, youth, indigenous peoples, minorities and other underrepresented groups in society. Greater intergenerational collaboration not only builds solidarity among political actors of all ages, but also encourages the inclusion of youth perspectives in policy solutions.

### **Leading in times of crisis**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a vivid reminder that crises often arise when least expected. The pandemic has challenged our governance systems and our ability to handle emergencies. We need to learn from that experience and be better prepared for the next crisis.

Parliaments have a critical role to play in enhancing the quality of emergency preparedness and their own ability to manage crises whenever they occur. Parliaments must also ensure that democratic processes are not undermined in such situations.

Crisis management plans must be an integral part of our governance system. Rules and procedures and the roles and responsibilities of political actors need to be clearly set out in legal frameworks or policies. The balance of power must be preserved even during times of crisis. Parliaments need to be able to continue to fulfil their oversight mandate and supervise the actions of the executive at all times.

Above all, responsiveness and inclusiveness must be an integral part of every crisis management strategy. Parliaments need to communicate with people to demonstrate that they are listening to what people have to say and are addressing issues of public concern.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many parliaments managed to adjust to the new realities and use innovative approaches in their operations. Still, we need to prepare ourselves even more thoroughly. We must further embed the use of digital technologies in parliamentary operations to ensure continuity of work in times of emergency and explore new mechanisms of public participation and ways to connect society and the authorities.

We recognize that the contemporary challenges to democracy have deep roots. We nevertheless accept our role and responsibility as actors in addressing these challenges, conscious of the need to protect democracy for the common good. We acknowledge the need to show effective leadership, to pursue bold and innovative initiatives, and to learn from each other's successes and failures.

As such, we pledge to do our utmost, individually and collectively, to overcome these challenges, build community, and protect and promote our democratic values and institutions.

## Legislation worldwide to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 143rd IPU Assembly  
(Madrid, 30 November 2021)*

The 143rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

*Condemning* all forms of online child sexual exploitation and abuse,

*Recalling* the universally accepted UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography,

*Also recalling* the Council of Europe's widely recognized Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the "Lanzarote Convention"),

*Further recalling* in particular Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the protection of children from all forms of violence, injury, neglect, exploitation and abuse, including sexual abuse,

*Reaffirming* that the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, participation, survival and development, provide the framework for all actions concerning children,

*Noting* that the sale, trafficking and online child sexual exploitation and abuse is a growing and international concern that needs cross-border collaboration and coordination, and acknowledging that the fight against it has to be a high-priority global initiative,

*Acknowledging* the necessity of a multifaceted approach to effectively prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse on all levels in order to protect children from such exploitation in the first place,

*Bearing in mind* the lack of a sufficient legal framework, specifically legal provisions criminalizing all forms of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, budget, technical expertise and workforce in many States to effectively combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse,

*Recognizing* the importance of creating awareness about the preventive measures and harmful effects of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in the eyes of the public, particularly parents, teachers, children and community leaders, legislatures, law enforcement agencies and all other relevant policymakers,

*Considering* that children's voices are in general little or badly considered, and that law enforcement agents and judges are still poorly or not at all informed about cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse children can be victims of,

*Acknowledging* the importance of relevant (sexual) education programmes, communication campaigns and media literacy as a basis for prevention in any cultural milieu, as well as education on the role that increased digital capabilities play in increasing the vulnerability of victims and facilitating perpetrators of online child sexual exploitation and abuse,

*Recognizing* the importance of information and communications technologies in children's lives as a new tool for learning, socialization, expression, inclusion and fulfilment of the rights of the child and fundamental freedoms, such as the right to education and the right to freedom of expression,

*Deeply concerned* by risks of new and evolving forms of violence against children, child sexual abuse and exploitation, which are related to the use of information and communications technologies, and by cyber-bullying,

*Noting* the precarious situation of the child in cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse and the importance of a victim-centred approach when combatting online child sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as child-centred rehabilitation processes,

*Considering* that it often takes minors who are victims of sexual abuse, either by direct or online exploitation, many years before they talk, if at all, about what they had gone through, and even longer before taking any legal steps,

*Mindful* that, although girls seem to be the main victims of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, many boys are affected as well, and both must be approached differently in terms of prevention programmes and financing,

*Conscious* that child exploitation is also a commercial act and may thus be driven by economic motivations,

*Noting* that the fight against online child sexual exploitation and abuse is complicated by the increased access to the internet, fast-moving new technologies such as cryptocurrencies and Blockchain, with their untraceable nature in the commercial sale of child exploitation materials, the number of online platforms and apps, as well as anonymous features of platforms, which have made it harder to target perpetrators,

*Stressing* the importance of cross-sector, multi-disciplinary and international collaboration in the strategy to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and recognizing the existing work of organizations such as INTERPOL and the International Telecommunication Union,

*Underlining* the corporate social responsibility that private sector information and communications technology companies must take for combatting, preventing and monitoring online child sexual exploitation and abuse,

1. *Urges* those parliaments that have not yet done so to consider ratifying the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;
2. *Urges* parliaments to adopt specific, comprehensive and harmonized legal frameworks to introduce national online child sexual exploitation and abuse laws, considering the WeProtect Global Alliance's Model National Response as the guiding model for legislation while maintaining protection of freedom of expression, to increase resources allocated to this work and to exchange among themselves good practices in this regard;
3. *Underlines* that such a legal framework should protect all children under the age of 18 regardless of a lower age of consent for sexual activity, and stipulate that a child cannot be considered as able to consent to engage in online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and should include provisions to avoid re-traumatization and re-victimization of victims throughout the investigative and judicial proceedings;
4. *Urges* parliaments to ensure that the national legal framework includes complete definitions and criminalization of all forms of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children for financial gain, and of the production, possession, and distribution of child sexual abuse materials along with repeated access to websites containing such images; also, legislation must consider online sexual offences against children as an extraditable offence and must establish a legal basis for mutual legal assistance between States in respect of the investigation of online offences;

5. *Also urges* parliaments to ensure that cross-border cooperation and coordination between law enforcement authorities is established to prevent known perpetrators from committing abuse in other countries, taking into account existing efforts involving INTERPOL, the International Telecommunication Union and other international organizations;
6. *Calls upon* members of parliament to emphasize the need for rapid and effective international cooperation and law enforcement responses, such as removing hurdles preventing law enforcement agencies from sharing vital information, and to address the growing illegal usage of cryptocurrencies to trade in child sexual exploitation material;
7. *Emphasizes* the importance of a strategic private sector commitment to cooperation with law enforcement agencies including in the reporting, prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of online child sexual exploitation and abuse offenders, and of strengthening and equipping law enforcement agencies and the justice system to ensure a child-friendly system, including specialized training in the detection and investigation of crimes against children, as well as specialized treatment, care and interview of child victims;
8. *Urges* parliaments to ensure that technology companies commit to increase the transparency and accountability measures in the prevention, moderation, reporting and removal of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, including a safety by design approach;
9. *Also urges* parliaments to develop thorough infrastructure, including trained medical professionals, to support victims of online child sexual exploitation, abuse and blackmail in their physical and psychological recovery and social integration, whilst ensuring a healthy and supportive reporting environment in their State, avoiding the re-victimization of girls, boys and adolescents who have been victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse, and ensuring sufficient financial and human resources for, inter alia, educational programmes that are also accessible to children with disabilities, hotlines for low-threshold reporting of suspected child sexual abuse material and victim helplines;
10. *Further urges* parliaments to promote media literacy for children, parents and guardians to build knowledge and skills in using media and thus provide protection to children and young people;
11. *Urges* parliaments to ensure that measures to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse take into account the differentiated needs and experiences of children according to their age and sex, including by ensuring their participation in the development of such measures;
12. *Calls on* the IPU to draft a model law for States and formalize, in the best interests of the child, clear legislation on combatting online child sexual exploitation and abuse, where children's rights, education, voices, needs and security should take centre stage in any proceedings that affect their wellbeing;
13. *Also calls on* the IPU to prepare a parliamentary guide that sets out clear working mechanisms for parliaments and to discuss legislation on combatting online exploitation and sexual abuse of children; moreover, the guide shall include oversight tools to monitor public policies on the protection of children and include specific mechanisms of action that are compatible with parliaments in different regions of the world;
14. *Recognizes* the active role of men and boys as strategic partners and allies in changing norms and practices that motivate all forms of gender-based violence, including online child sexual exploitation and abuse;



15. *Requests* parliaments to undertake to promote, by all means necessary, the need for professionals surrounding children to identify the violence committed against them, and to mobilize these professionals to this effect, namely by providing training to detect such violence and by making available resources for and advice on the transmission and reporting of such alarming information;
16. *Emphasizes* that children should never be blamed for abuse and that victim blaming should be prevented by all possible means;
17. *Underlines* the importance of the role of poverty, inequitable socio-economic structures, lack of education, gender discrimination, harmful traditional practices in online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and emphasizes the importance of the economic empowerment of women, and therefore calls for intensifying the international community's efforts to combat poverty as an important entry point to combatting such crimes;
18. *Calls on* parliaments to legislate that companies in the digital industry develop programmes and mechanisms to automatically identify and report any harmful content related to online child sexual exploitation and abuse and are obliged to detect and delete this content immediately;
19. *Also calls on* parliaments to facilitate automated detection methods while ensuring respect for personal integrity, bearing in mind Article 16 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the right to privacy, and also Article 17 of the International Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights, which provides for the right to privacy and family;
20. *Calls on* parliaments, law enforcement agencies, internet service providers and internet infrastructure officials, including the Internet Governance Forum, to unite and work together to establish a specific and effective mechanism that combats all malicious activities online;
21. *Emphasizes* the need for sustained education focusing on digital culture change amongst youth for relevant policy makers, law enforcement agencies, education sector and staff working with children and youth, and the public, including both children and their parents;
22. *Invites* the IPU to schedule periodic meetings and workshops with the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children and with other stakeholders and global activists in the fight against this phenomenon, emphasizing global initiatives for preventing and tackling the problem; and also invites parliaments to exchange, through IPU activities, information regarding good practices and successful experiences in combatting online sexual exploitation and abuse.

## Report of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

*Noted by the 143rd IPU Assembly  
(Madrid, 30 November 2021)*

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security held two sittings on 28 and 29 November 2021 with its President (ad interim), Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain), in the Chair.

On 28 November, after going through procedural items and official communications, the Committee held an expert hearing on the theme *Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace*. The Committee had chosen this theme for its resolution to be negotiated at the 144th IPU Assembly.

The Committee members were shown a video which outlined the preliminary findings of a team of four students from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID) of Geneva who had been carrying out research with the IPU since March 2021 on the human security approach to foreign policy. The video introduced "human security" as a comprehensive, context-specific, prevention-oriented, multi-sectoral, and people-centred approach.

The advantages of such an approach in the everyday work of parliaments were highlighted, specifically regarding the potential for greater participation of the public in decision-making processes, because it is the recipients of these policies that are best suited to identify priorities.

The President recalled that the objectives of the expert hearing were: (1) to raise the IPU Members' awareness of the topic at stake, and (2) to provide insights and inputs for the draft resolution to the co-Rapporteurs Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden) [joining remotely] and Mr. A. Bagbin (Ghana), who was represented at the 143rd Assembly by Ms. D. Gomashie (Ghana).

The President introduced the moderator of the experts round table segment, Ms. H. Qasas, Head of the Secretariat of the Principles for Peace Initiative. Ms. Qasas recalled that there were currently 56 active conflicts around the world, a record since the Second World War. Most of those conflicts had gone through a failed peace process. The human consequences, such as mass displacement or polarization, were disastrous and amplified by the effect of climate change. It was in this context, that Ms. Qasas reiterated that the topic of reframing of peace processes was most relevant. She then introduced the panellists:

- Mr. B. Koenders, Former Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, [joining remotely]
- Ms. N. Bagayoko, Chair of the African Security Sector Network
- Ms. J. Lilja, Director of Studies, Peace and Development of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) [joining remotely]
- Ms. B. Nepam, Co-founder of the Control Arms Foundation of India and of the Manipur Women Gun Survivor Network.

In their introductory presentations the panellists exposed the unsustainable aspects of the contemporary peace processes. They addressed the gaps in peacebuilding that had to be bridged to ensure long lasting peace for the people. The importance of dialogue was highlighted, in particular the duty of parliamentarians to involve women and youth and to go beyond inclusion by having those people who were implicated themselves contribute to shaping the solutions to the problems affecting their reality. Rather than top-down imposed solutions, drawn academically by external actors, it was the role of parliamentarians to engage with the local populations and communities and to ensure that local experts, who understood the complexity of the situation, the language, the culture, were involved in peace processes.

Mr. Koenders insisted on the need for and relevance of parliamentarians in peace processes. As a former parliamentarian himself, he argued that not only did parliamentarians represent the people but they also must act as guarantors of peace. Tools such as mediation were important as was the need to ensure the inclusion of non-armed groups, civil society, women and youth at the negotiation table. He stressed the value of large processes such as consultations, expert committees, and work with tribal and religious leaders. To make peace more sustainable the international community must consider a charter or covenant that would define the role of international and national players.

Ms. Bagayoko insisted on the inappropriateness of “one size fits all” solutions and echoed the need for deeper inclusion of local contexts – including local history and languages – in peacekeeping processes. The local failures of contemporary peacekeeping rippled into neighbouring nations and destabilized the region. Such disastrous consequences showed how crucial the success of peace processes was at an international level.

Ms. Lilja called for a broader notion of peace processes and warned that no society was protected against conflict. People turned to violence when discontent within society was continuously disregarded. The risk of conflict was also exacerbated by climate change – which meant that every single country was at risk of conflict. She concluded by stating that parliament was the institution that fostered dialogue and, as such, could de-escalate conflict. Engagement with opposition and marginalized groups in society was key to promoting peace.

Ms. Nepram’s intervention was a heartily felt reminder of the harsh reality of conflict zones. She recalled that there were 378 forgotten conflicts in the world, many of them on indigenous territories and outlined the tragedy that befell people indiscriminately regardless of whether international news covered these conflicts. In conclusion, she underlined that women were strong constituents for peace which was why the agenda must be broadened to include them and indigenous communities in peace processes.

The next segment featured the two co-Rapporteurs, Ms. D. Gomashie (Ghana) and Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), who presented their initial ideas with regard to the draft resolution. They recalled the crucial role that parliament could play when it came to contributing to peace processes. Parliaments and parliamentarians had a mandate to create conditions for dialogue and had the capacity to listen to all ideas, even those they were not in favour of. Inclusiveness was in parliament’s DNA and resorting to representative institutions as major stakeholders could only increase the sustainability of peace building efforts. To back peace processes, parliaments could also pass laws on empowerment, education, and other social measures with a view to reduce tensions. The co-Rapporteurs explained that they would be working on a very concrete resolution that could take the form of a set of guidelines accessible to and usable by all members of parliament who were dealing with matters of international peace and security.

In the ensuing discussion the participants voiced their general agreement that peace processes must be reframed and their understanding that the failure of contemporary peace efforts had left too many people behind. Participants recalled the disastrous consequences of the rise of terrorism and the significant challenges it posed to the whole of humanity. Emphasizing their experience of the different conflicts that impacted their respective regions, the parliamentarians all welcomed the efforts of the co-Rapporteurs to draft the resolution as a parliamentary set of guidelines to assist parliaments in securing and sustaining peace for their constituents. Participants were of the view that while peace, in addition to stabilization, was a prerequisite for development, parliaments must also address the long-term economic and social causes of conflict. The issue of decreasing military spending was also addressed as those funds could be diverted to peace and sustainable development-related expenditures.

Participants agreed that political mediation was a valuable tool for parliaments to be used at the local, national, regional and even international level. They also strongly reinforced the importance of public engagement especially with local stakeholders who, with their knowledge of the history, language, impact of climate change in a given area, could help contextualize peace actions. Echoing the experts, participants also recognized that young people and women were among the main players in resolving conflicts and building peace and should therefore be included in peace negotiations. Participants stated that in terms of peacebuilding parliaments must both look back to

resolve longstanding conflicts and look ahead to anticipate and prevent tensions that would inevitably arise from climate change, in cyberspace, and from the weakening of international institutions and democratic processes. In so doing, they must cooperate and share practices in order for these new challenges to be tackled by all.

On 29 November the Committee examined its second substantial item in a panel discussion on the theme *Parliament's role in addressing the risks of diversion in arms transfers*.

The Committee members were shown a video message from Mr. L. Gberie, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations Office at Geneva and President of the Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In his presentation, Mr. Gberie stressed the importance of parliamentary action to curb the flows of diverted weapons. The Diversion International Exchange Forum (DIEF) was a useful tool for addressing diversion. He highlighted and welcomed the work of the IPU on involving parliaments in the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty.

The President introduced the moderator for the panel of experts, Mr. A. Ware, Global Coordinator with Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND). Mr. Ware presented the publication *Assuring our common future: A guide to parliamentary action in support of disarmament for security and sustainable development* which was prepared jointly by the GCSP, IPU, PGA, PNND, PFSALW, WFC, and was supported by UNODA. Mr. Ware, then introduced the panellists:

- Ms. B. Nepram, Co-founder of the Control Arms Foundation of India and of the Manipur Women Gun Survivor Network
- Ms. K. Olofsson, Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Forum for Small Arms and Light Weapons
- Mr. R. del Picchia, former French Senator and former Member of the IPU Executive Committee.

In their introductory presentations the panellists highlighted the long-lasting impacts that the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) had on societies, a phenomenon deepened by the diversion of weapons.

Mr. del Picchia focussed on the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, supplemental to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the only legally binding agreement against the circulation of SALW. France had ratified the agreement in 2019 thus being the first of the world's most significant producers of weapons to do so. Mr. del Picchia called for the universalization of the ATT as a way to deepen the fight against SALW trafficking and to make the world a better place for civilian populations. Ms. Olofsson recalled that diversion was a key international security concern and that illicit proliferation of SALW constituted a serious violation of human rights and international law. While there were international agreements and agendas on the issue, there was no universal acknowledged definition of "diversion". She highlighted the key role of parliaments in addressing that issue through their various constitutional mandates and encouraged the sharing of experience and good practices. Ms. Nepram referred to the role of parliamentarians in ensuring that taxpayers' money was well spent for safety and security. Global disarmament should also be rethought and tackled on the ground. She gave the example of local women's movements that focussed on arms control to ensure peaceful communities where children could go to school and people could build their lives.

In the discussion that followed, parliamentarians welcomed the recommendations, parliamentary tools, and anecdotes brought forth by the panellists, especially regarding the need for higher traceability which many argued to be the most appropriate way to address the threat illicit flows of weapons pose to national security.

They agreed that SALW proliferation was a major component of instability and insecurity in developing countries. The relation between the diversion of weapons and terrorism were stressed by multiple parliamentarians, heightening the need to eradicate illicit flows of weapons that killed massively. Participants agreed on the need for enhanced transparency from governments but also from weapons manufacturers who had the means to help enforce trackability of the weapons they produced. Also addressed was the issue of international agreements and the need to bring in parliament from the very beginning of negotiations. If signing was a governmental matter, ratification could only be done with the support of parliament and, most importantly, implementation occurred locally and must be legislatively framed accordingly. The key role women had with regard to disarmament on the ground was highlighted and insisted upon. Finally, discussions touched upon the amount of resources allocated to militarization, armament and overall military spending in contrast to the dire need for further investments in health, education, and sustainable development efforts.

The report on the work of the Committee was presented to the Assembly at its last sitting on 30 November by the acting President of the Standing Committee, Mr. Echániz (Spain).

The Bureau of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security met on 28 November 2021. Nine out of 18 members and the representative of the President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians were present.

During the meeting, the Bureau discussed its workplan. It was decided to devote all the time allocated for the 144th Assembly to negotiating the next resolution. The proposals were subsequently approved by the Standing Committee at the end of its last plenary sitting on 29 November.

## Report of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

*Noted by the 143rd IPU Assembly  
(Madrid, 30 November 2021)*

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development held its sittings on 27 and 29 November. Both sittings were chaired by Mr. W. William (Seychelles). Ms. H. Järvinen (Finland) and Mr. S. Patra (India) served as co-Rapporteurs of the resolution.

### **Debate on the theme *Leveraging Information and Communication Technology as an enabler for the education sector, including in times of pandemic.***

The debate was organized around the theme of the Committee's resolution that will be tabled at the 144th Assembly in spring 2022. The debate provided the co-Rapporteurs with initial information about how the IPU Member Parliaments approached this issue. The theme and key issues for consideration and discussion were introduced by Ms. I. Kharkova, Associate Project Officer at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), expert on the nexus between education and digitalization.

Education is the backbone of human development. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can foster inclusive and quality teaching and learning. Digital technological innovation has reshaped the way we learn; however, technology is not neutral, and teaching and learning should not be driven by technology, but rather keep a human-centered approach. ICT in education serves a twofold function, as a provision medium and pedagogical tool. ICT has the potential to expand access to education and strengthen it; enhance the quality of learning; and provide lifelong learning pathways through formal and informal methods.

While there are several international instruments that aim to ensure education is inclusive, equitable and ethical, and that outline the potential of ICT, digital inequalities in education persist and the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how significant the digital divide within and among countries is. To enhance ICT for education, coherent funding and enabling policies are needed. Technological innovations should promote digital inclusion in education; address the digital divide and gender inequalities; prioritize the most marginalized; foster a humanistic approach; address the needs of teachers and learners, including the protection of their privacy; and create ecosystems where technology, digital content and skills are integrated to build resilient educational systems.

The co-Rapporteurs also gave their view on the topic, noting that even before the pandemic the educational gap across the globe was already very wide, and that leveraging and enabling were the main areas to focus on to bridge that divide. Furthermore, digital learning needed teachers trained for the task.

A total of 30 delegates from (in order of appearance) Slovenia; the United Arab Emirates; India; Romania; Kuwait; the United Kingdom; North Macedonia; Egypt; the Islamic Republic of Iran; the Syrian Arab Republic; the Netherlands; South Africa; Saudi Arabia; Indonesia; Burundi; Pakistan; Mexico; Portugal; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Algeria; Bahrain; Cameroon; Palestine; Lebanon; San Marino; South Sudan; Zimbabwe; Zambia; Ukraine; South Africa, took the floor to give their comments and share their views and the good practices their countries had put in place to promote ICT as an enabler of education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ICT can indeed build resilience in the schooling and education system. A common point in the interventions was that access and availability of devices and connectivity, were equally important as effective teacher training. Provision of remote learning does not automatically ensure take-up and better evidence generation. The effectiveness of remote learning is critical. Content must be adapted to the new modalities of teaching and learning. One other prominent theme was the need to harness the potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships, as well as of the wide range of learning delivery systems, such as television, radio, and social media.

To conclude the debate, the co-Rapporteur Ms. Järvinen recalled the importance of economic support for enhancing ICT systems for educational purposes, as well as the necessity to recognize that digitalization could deepen social and economic inequalities, unless it was accessible to all. The co-Rapporteurs would work on a draft resolution incorporating the inputs provided during the debate.

**Panel discussion on the theme *Impact of climate change on natural resources: How can parliaments ensure inclusive water access and availability?***

The conservation of natural resources should help meet the world's growing needs. Global demand for food and water is expected to double in the next 30 years. Climate change has both direct and indirect effects on agricultural productivity including changing rainfall patterns, drought, floods and the geographical redistribution of pests and diseases. The panel aimed to identify key actions that parliaments could take to respond to those trends.

The following experts contributed to the panel discussion: Mr. D. Muruven, Global Policy Lead for Freshwater, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and Mr. Lifeng Li, Director, Land and Water Division, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Mr. Muruven elaborated on the nexus between water and climate change and the detrimental effects climate change had on water availability. Water systems were facing numerous constraints which needed to be looked at holistically, meaning that the management of natural resources and the infrastructure to access them must be given equal consideration. Climate resilience was not a given. Social innovation could offer a novel and integrated approach to build resilient societies and address societal, economic and water-related challenges by combining the technological and non-technological dimensions of innovation. Multiple actors were needed to leverage innovation. The government and the public sector had a strong history of innovation, but their efforts needed to embrace indigenous and local knowledge.

Mr. Lifeng Li reinforced the message that climate change was expected to increase the complexity of land and water systems which threatened food security. Agricultural productivity was affected directly and indirectly by climate change. Water scarcity was a global threat and water stress was on the rise. To increase resilience and enhance climate adaptation, including through agriculture, an integrated approach was needed to specific land and water policy instruments and inclusive resources management decision-making. Coordinated and coherent policy arrangements across all sectors and investment in innovation and climate-smart technologies were necessary to provide long term sustainability.

In the ensuing debate, 25 delegates from (in order of appearance) Saudi Arabia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, the Syrian Arab Republic, Egypt, Viet Nam, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Romania, Kuwait, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Kingdom, the Arab Parliament, the United Arab Emirates, Madagascar, Mexico, Palestine, France, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Finland, Gabon, Niger, Portugal, Israel, took the floor to explain the challenges and priorities in the management of natural resources in their national contexts. Water is essential to all aspects of life and it plays a key role in human security. Access to clean water is a human right. Interventions revealed the importance of transboundary cooperation in the management of natural resources and the need to work collectively to ensure that financing for development reaches the people.

**Elections to the Bureau, work plan for the 144th IPU Assembly, and any other business**

The Committee elected the President and Vice-President of the Committee and filled the remaining vacancies on the Bureau.

The Bureau met on 28 November. Members from India, Monaco, the Netherlands, and Pakistan provided an update on national activities that had been carried out since the last meeting. The IPU Strategy for the next five years was presented. The initial idea of adopting an internal climate change policy for the Organization and its Members was welcomed by the Bureau. The starting point would be to understand the carbon footprint of internal activities and of leveraging technology to reduce emissions. To this end, remote participation to IPU meetings could be enhanced and encouraged. It was also proposed that the Bureau focus each year on a specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by mapping what national parliaments were doing towards their implementation and by sharing their best practices. This knowledge could be shared in online meetings.

During the first sitting of the Committee, Ms. K. Jabre, IPU Director of the Division of Programmes, presented and launched a new IPU publication entitled *Guidelines for parliamentarians on budgeting for the SDGs: Making the most of public resources*. The publication provides information on key elements of budgeting for the SDGs and identifies concrete actions parliamentarians can take to advance efforts to achieve them. Mr. C. Chauvel, Global Lead, Inclusive Processes and Institutions, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), intervened remotely stressing the importance to find new sources of investment and new financing tools. Parliaments also needed to leverage on partnerships with different stakeholders (such as the academia, civil society, supreme audit institutions) to strengthen their scrutiny capacities and oversight role.



## Report of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

*Noted by the 143rd IPU Assembly  
(Madrid, 30 November 2021)*

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia) opened the session informing that he was acting as Committee Chair and that a formal election for the positions of president and vice-president would be held at the end of the session.

After the adoption of the agenda and of the summary records of the April 2021 Committee session, the Chair introduced the two panel discussions for the session. Thirty-four parliamentary delegations comprising some 80 parliamentarians were present.

### **Panel discussion 1: The global vaccination campaign to end the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons from the WHO and WTO**

This panel featured representatives from the WHO and UNAIDS instead of an WTO expert as none were available. Dr. S. Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, and Dr. K. O'Brien, Director of the Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals spoke for the WHO; Mr. E. Gomez, Chief of Staff, represented UNAIDS. Their interventions focused on questions of vaccine equity and accessibility, as well as on the general pandemic response of their respective agencies.

The global goal of immunizing 70 per cent of the population by June 2022 was off track because of limited manufacturing capacity of the vaccine as well as, to a lesser extent, to vaccine hesitancy by large segments of the population. Manufacturing capacity was constrained by the inherent difficulty in expanding production of a highly sophisticated medical product and in transferring technical knowhow, but also by constraints linked to intellectual property rights under the TRIPS agreement.

The WHO's ACT Accelerator and COVAX facility were created to make the vaccine widely available to developing countries who lacked the financial resources or the productive capacities to make their own vaccine doses. While these facilities were very helpful, they were not operating at capacity. Africa was the continent with the lowest number of people vaccinated. Only one per cent of vaccine production was in Africa. The WHO vaccine approval process did not favour any particular vaccine producer or country. Currently, eight vaccines out of seventeen had been authorized by the WHO. Any country wanting to seek WHO authorization can do so by submitting the required paperwork and allowing WHO inspection of the production facilities.

For UNAIDS, the COVID-19 pandemic response needed to consider lessons learned from the HIV pandemic such as the need for stronger public health systems to provide a whole range of medical services and not just vaccines or drugs. UNAIDS was a leading founder of the People's Vaccine Alliance to end vaccine apartheid. Key demands of the Alliance included a waiver of vaccine patents under the TRIPS agreement, and direct government investments to scale up vaccine production. The WHO and UNAIDS were unanimous in encouraging governments to make greater use of TRIPS flexibilities and in calling for more transparency in governments' purchasing contracts of vaccine doses from private producers.

The following fourteen delegations spoke from the floor in response to the panel presentations: Bahrain, Belgium, Egypt, India, Namibia, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These interventions and exchanges with panellists emphasized the need for greater global solidarity and for a much stronger pandemic response. As more than one speaker noted, "no one is safe until all are safe" and the recent emergence of the potentially more aggressive Omicron variant of the coronavirus was a stark reminder of the need to scale up the global response to the pandemic. With only one exception, speakers supported a patent waiver under the TRIPS agreement. The use of social media to spread vaccine misinformation needs to be countered with a facts-based public information campaign that respects people's right to free speech. Some speakers highlighted their own countries' example of global solidarity through donations of vaccine doses to COVAX or directly to countries in need.

**Panel discussion 2: The UN Secretary-General's Report on Our Common Agenda**

This panel consisted of a sole presenter in the person of Ms. M. Griffin, Policy Advisor, Office of the UN Secretary-General. Ms. Griffin discussed the main highlights of the September 2021 report of the Secretary-General (SG) whose title refers to the Common Agenda adopted at the conclusion of the High-Level Meeting to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations (UN75 Summit). The Common Agenda contained 12 commitments to address growing threats to the sustainability of the world, from climate change to future pandemics, as well as to peace and security. It reaffirmed countries' political commitment toward the lagging Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The underlying theme of the Common Agenda was the need to strengthen multilateralism as the only option to addressing those threats effectively, as best illustrated more recently by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SG's report provides some 90 recommendations on how the UN, countries and all partners, including parliaments, can work together to break the pattern of "business as usual" and embark on a new course that provides real answers to the people and restores their faith in government and in the international community. The SG's recommendations were drawn from various rounds of consultations with parliamentarians, civil society, youth and other groups. A key message of the report is that solidarity among nations is not merely an expression of charity but a matter of self-interest: when nations go it alone, they actually end up losing more than when they work with the international community.

Although the SG's report calls for greater parliamentary input in UN decision-making processes, members of parliament should look at the report as a whole and take action of their own to help bring its various recommendations to fruition. While a great number of recommendations can be carried out by the UNSG directly within his own authority, others, such as the proposal to hold a Summit of the Future in 2023, will need member States' endorsement. Ms. Griffin noted that while multilateral institutions needed fixing, overall they had managed in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that would have been unimaginable only ten years ago.

The following ten delegations spoke from the floor in response to Ms. Griffin's presentation: Algeria, Cyprus, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe. The various interventions and responses emphasized the representative, oversight and legislative role of parliaments as key to the implementation of international agreements such as the Common Agenda as well as to the ratification of international treaties. Speakers generally recognized the importance of multilateral solutions in an increasingly interdependent world. Parliaments can contribute to UN processes and multilateralism in many ways including by creating their own all-party parliamentary groups on UN affairs.

Besides their institutional role, members of parliament need to help support a climate of international solidarity that avoids fearmongering and knee-jerk reactions against other countries. Several interventions applauded the SG report for its focus on youth and on the future, and also urged the SG to pay closer attention to the issues of migration, terrorism, and digital currencies, as well as to the need for key principles of international law, such as national sovereignty and non-interference, to be consistently applied and respected.

Following the two substantive discussions, the Chair informed the Committee of the nominations received from the geopolitical groups to fill existing vacancies on the Bureau: Ms. H. Tigranyan (Armenia), Ms. E. Qatrawi (Moldova), Ms. C. López Castro (Mexico), Ms. E. Lindh (Sweden). With no objection to the nominations, the Chair invited the Committee to elect the President and the Vice-President of the Bureau as proposed by the geopolitical groups, namely, Ms. S. Noor of Kenya for President, and Mr. L. Wehrli of Switzerland as Vice President. These two members were elected by acclamation. In addition, Mr. A. Almutairi of Kuwait was announced as a replacement to Mr. Al-Hamad until the end of the term.

The Chair announced that a new IPU Observer Office to the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) was opened during the year. Ms. B. Brenner, Ambassador, representative of the IPU to UNOV, was invited to introduce herself as the IPU Observer responsible for relations with the UN community in that city. Ms. Brenner explained her role and the issues she would be working on, such as corruption, disarmament, and nuclear energy.

Having exhausted all items on the agenda, the Chair brought the session to a close.

## **Harnessing global parliamentary support for vaccine equity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic**

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 143rd IPU Assembly  
(Madrid, 29 November 2021)*

The 143rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

*Welcoming* the UN Security Council Resolution 2565 (2021) adopted on 26 February 2021,

*Recalling* that the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical, mental and social health and well-being is a fundamental human right enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Sustainable Development Goal 3, the Constitution of the World Health Organization, the majority of national constitutions and other international treaties and agreements to which the IPU Members are signatories,

*Also recalling* that this right is accorded to all human beings regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status,

*Cognizant* that, on 23 September 2019, world leaders endorsed a comprehensive political declaration on health at the UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage under the theme *Universal Health Coverage: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World* in which they undertook to co-operate in strengthening health systems to ensure that they are equitable, resilient and capable of meeting everyone's needs as an essential priority for international development,

*Mindful* that, at the 141st IPU Assembly held in Belgrade, Serbia in October 2019, the IPU adopted a landmark resolution entitled *Achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2030: The role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health* calling for parliaments to take all legal and policy measures to achieve Universal Health Coverage and address barriers to access to health for all,

*Noting* that the COVID-19 pandemic has been an ongoing moment of reckoning for health systems and health security around the world, as well as to our commitment in both word and deed to achieving Universal Health Coverage and addressing barriers to access to health for all in such times of crisis,

*Recognizing* that vaccination is part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce transmission and save lives and is among the most important tools in the fight against the pandemic, and reaffirming that extensive COVID-19 immunization is a global public good,

*Welcoming* the fact that the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative has already delivered more than 550 million vaccine doses to low and lower-middle income countries, including substantial amounts of vaccine donations from high income countries, and has secured enough vaccines to cover 43 per cent of the populations concerned,

*Concerned* that prolonged delays in the recognition and registration of vaccines complicate the health and developmental crisis, economic downturn and suffering occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa and other regions among those most affected, and that vaccine inequality translates into social and economic inequality resulting in more fatalities and increased poverty,

Therefore the 143rd Assembly:

1. *Calls upon* the international community and the WHO to further advance joint efforts to ensure timely, equitable and universal access to safe, affordable, quality and effective vaccines, with particular regard to the needs of low and middle income countries and the most affected regions;
2. *Calls upon* countries to recognize the importance of the principle of equity, meaning that each person must be vaccinated in accordance with their level of risk and needs, and to ensure that that principle be reflected at the national and global levels with respect to access to essential vaccines;
3. *Encourages* vaccine manufacturers to provide regular, clear supply forecasts as to how they will fulfil and prioritize their contracts with COVAX and other relevant regional initiatives;
4. *Also encourages* vaccine manufacturers to enhance the production of vaccines by using flexible cooperation models such as building up fill and finish production capacities, technology partnerships and licensing activities;
5. *Calls upon* governments to harmonize all regulatory requirements to accelerate the supply of vaccines, and provide the logistics and training for implementing large-scale vaccination programmes;
6. *Implores* parliamentarians to work with their national governments to exert a global and collective influence on the WTO to eliminate all export restrictions and any other trade barriers on COVID-19 vaccines and the inputs involved in their production;
7. *Insists* on the fact that both national and international efforts to raise awareness regarding the effectiveness of vaccines, to engage communities and to reduce vaccine hesitancy are indispensable to attain a sufficient degree of immunization around the world and that considerably more efforts in this field are required.

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS** ***LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS***

Mr./M. Duarte Pacheco

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union  
*Président de l'Union interparlementaire*

Ms./Mme Meritxell Batet Lamaña

Speaker of the Congress of Deputies  
*Présidente du Congrès des Députés*

Mr./M. Ander Gil

President of the Senate  
*Président du Sénat*

Mr./M. Martin Chungong

Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union  
*Secrétaire général de l'Union interparlementaire*

**I. MEMBERS - MEMBRES****ALGERIA – ALGERIE**

BENNAI, Ahmed (M.) Chef de la délégation	Vice-Président du Conseil de la Nation
BENBADIS, Fawzia (Mme.) Comité sur les questions relatives au Moyen-Orient	Membre du Conseil de la Nation
BOUDEN, Monder (M.)	Vice-Président de l'Assemblée populaire nationale (RND)
BOUCHOUIT, Mohamed Anouar (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée populaire nationale (I)
ILIMI, Farida (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée populaire nationale (FLN)
KHARCHI, Ahmed (M.) Commission permanente de la paix et de la sécurité internationale	Membre du Conseil de la Nation (FLN)
BENZIADA, Mounia (Mme.) Secrétaire	Cadre administratif, Conseil de la Nation
TOUTAOUI, Abderaouf (M.)	Chargé du protocole
BOUZEKRI, Hamid (M.)	Conseiller
(RND: National Democratic Rally / Rassemblement national démocratique)	
(FLN: National Libération Front / Front de libération nationale)	
(I : Independent / Indépendant)	

**ANDORRA – ANDORRE**

PALMITJAVILA, Meritxell (Mme.) Leader of the delegation	Vice-Présidente du Conseil général (DA)
COSTA, Ferran (M.)	Membre du Conseil général (L'A) Président de la Commission de l'éducation, de la recherche, de la culture, de la jeunesse et des sports Commission des finances et du budget
NAUDI, Carles (M.)	Membre du Conseil général (CC) Commission des finances et du budget Commission des affaires étrangères
VELA, Susanna (Mme.)	Membre du Conseil général (PS) Commission de l'éducation, de la recherche, de la culture, de la jeunesse et des sports Commission de la santé
COMA, Berna (Mme.)	Membre du Conseil général (DA) Vice-Présidente de la Commission des affaires étrangères Commission de l'aménagement du territoire, de l'urbanisme et de l'environnement Commission de la santé
RODRIGUEZ, Arantxa (Ms.) Secretary of the Group and to the delegation	
(DA: Democrats for Andorra / Démocrates pour Andorre)	
(L'A: Liberal Party / Parti Libéral)	
(CC: Committed Citizens / Citoyens engagés)	
(PS: Social Democratic Party / Parti Social-démocrate)	

**ANGOLA**

VALENTE, Maria Idalina (Ms.) President of the Group, Leader of the delegation	Member of the National Assembly (MPLA)
PELIGANGA, Isabel (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (MPLA)
CHIMBINDA, Arlete (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (UNITA)
GASPAR, João (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (MPLA)
DE NERI, Pedro Agostinho (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary General
BARRICA, Nildeice (Ms.)	Adviser, National Assembly
(MPLA: Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola / Mouvement populaire pour la libération de l'Angola)	
(UNITA: National Union for the Total Independence of Angola / Union nationale pour l'indépendance totale de l'Angola)	

**ARMENIA – ARMENIE**

SIMONYAN, Alen (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the National Assembly (CC)
HAKOBYAN, Hasmik (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (CC)
KONJORYAN, Hayk (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (CC)
MAMIJANYAN, Hayk (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (RPA)
VARDANYAN, Tsovinar (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (CC)
VARDEVANYAN, Aram (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly
NARIBEKYAN, Vahan (Mr.)	Secretary General
HAJI-HAKOBYAN, Hakob (Mr.)	Head of the Protocol Department
ARAKELYAN, Davit (Mr.)	Assistant to the President of Parliament
ISRAELIAN, Arman (Mr.)	Head of the Foreign Relations Department, National Assembly
GHAZARYAN, Zabela (Ms.) Secretary of the Group	Senior Specialist of the Foreign Relations department, National Assembly
KARMIRSHALYAN, Vladimir, Ambassador	

(CC: Civil Contract / Contrat civil)

(RPA: Republican Party of Armenia / Parti républicain arménien)

**AUSTRIA – Autriche**

LOPATKA, Reinhold (Mr.) Chair, High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violence Extremism Leader of the delegation	Member of the National Council (ÖVP)
MATZNETTER, Christoph (Mr.)	Member of the National Council (SPÖ)
GRAF, Martin (Mr.)	Member of the National Council (FPÖ)
STÖGMÜLLER, David (Mr.)	Member of the National Council (Grüne)
BRANDSTÖTTER, Henrike (Ms.)	Member of the National Council (NEOS)
BAYR, Petra (Ms.) Advisory Group on Health	Member of the National Council (SPÖ)
WINTONIAK, Alexis (Mr.)	Deputy Secretary General, National Council
Member of the ASGP	
RUND, Petra (Ms.)	Head of International Relations Department
Adviser to the Group	
MATUSCHEK, Matthias (Mr.)	
Secretary to the delegation	
GABRON, Nadine (Ms.)	Adviser
EBNER, Christian (Mr.) Ambassador	

(ÖVP: Austrian People's Party / Parti populaire)

(NEOS: Austrian Liberal Party / Parti libéral autrichien)

(FPÖ: Austrian Freedom Party / Parti de la liberté)

(Grüne: The Greens / Les verts)

(SPÖ: Austrian Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate autrichien)

**AZERBAIJAN – AZERBAÏDJAN**

GAFAROVA, Sahiba (Ms.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the National Assembly
BAYRAMOV, Kamran (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (YAP)
	Regional Affairs Committee
ALLAHVERDIYEV, Elnur (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (YAP)
ARPADARAI, Nigar (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly
HASANGULIYEV, Gudrat (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (Cons)
TAGHIYEV, Teymur (Mr.)	Head of the Secretariat
HUSEYNOV, Elmar (Mr.)	Assistant to the Speaker on International Affairs
CHALABIZADA, Lala (Ms.)	Head of the Division on Work with International Parliamentary Organizations
Secretary to the delegation	
ALI-ZADE, Mir Kamal (Mr.)	Chief Adviser of the International Relations
MALIKOVA, Gamar (Ms.)	Adviser of the International Relations Department
HASANOV, Ramiz (Mr.) Ambassador	

(YAP: New Azerbaijan Party / Nouveau parti de l'Azerbaïdjan)

(Cons: Whole Azerbaijan Popular Front Party / Conservateurs)

**BAHRAIN – BAHREIN**

ZAINAL, Fawzia (Ms.) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism President of the Group, Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the Council of Representatives
FAKHRO, Jamal (Mr.)	First Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council
SALMAN, Jameela (Ms.) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law	Second Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council
SALMAN, Abdulnabi (Mr.)	Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives
ALTHAWADI, Abdullah Khalifa (Mr.) Working Group on Science and Technology	Member of the Council of Representatives
RAMZI FAYEZ, Hala (Ms.) First Vice-President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Member of the Shura Council
ALABBASI, Mohammed (Mr.)	Member of the Council of Representatives
BUNAJMA, Rashed (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary General of the Shura Council
ALENEZI, Hanadi (Ms.) Secretary to the Delegation	Senior Parliamentary Relations Development Specialist, Council of Representatives
ALJEEB, Fawzia (Ms.) Secretary to the delegation	Shura Council
ABDULAZIZ, Mustafa (Mr.) Secretary to the delegation	Council of Representatives
ABED, Hussain (Mr.)	Senior Political Researcher, Council of Representatives
ALHAMDI, Saleh (Ms.)	Protocol and Public Relations Coordinator
MOHAMED, Ali (Mr.)	Senior Communication and Media Specialist

**BELARUS**

VASILEVICH, Maryia (Ms.) Bureau of Women Parliamentarians Forum of Young Parliamentarians	Member of the House of Representatives
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**BELGIUM – BELGIQUE**

COGOLATI, Samuel (M.) President of the Group, Leader of the delegation Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians	Member of the Chamber of Representatives (Ecolo) Committee on Energy, Environment and Climate Foreign Affairs Committee Advice Committee regarding EU Matters
GRYFFROY, Andries (Mr.) Bureau, Standing Committee on UN Affairs	Member of the Senate (N-VA) Committee on Transversal Matters - Powers of the Regions
JADIN, Kattrin (Ms.)	Member of the Chamber of Representatives (MR) National Defense Committee Foreign Affairs Committee
LACROIX, Christophe (Mr.) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law	Member of the Chamber of Representatives (PS) National Defense Committee Foreign Affairs Committee Committee on Economy, Consumer Protection and Digital Agenda
LANJRI, Nahima (Ms.)	Member of the Chamber of Representatives (CD&V) Committee on Social Matters, Employment and Pensions
DEBOUTTE, Reinhilde (Ms.) Member of the ASGP	Deputy Secretary General, Chamber of Representatives
REZSÖHÁZY, André (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Director General, Senate
VERCAMMEN, Peter (Mr.) Secretary of the Group	Deputy Director, Senate
DANG-DUY, Liêm (Mr.) Deputy Secretary of the Group	Senior Adviser, Chamber of Representatives

(Ecolo: Green Party / netherlÉcologistes confédérés pour l'organisation de luttés originales)

(N-VA: New Flemish Alliance / Nouvelle alliance flamande)

(MR: Reformist Movement / Mouvement réformateur)

(PS: Socialist Party / Parti Socialiste)

(CD&amp;V: Flemish Christian Democrats / Démocrates chrétiens flamands)



**BENIN**

BAKO-ARIFARI, Nassirou (M.)  
Président du Comité des droits de l'homme  
des parlementaires

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale, Président de la  
Commission des Relations extérieures

BABA MOUSSA, Mariam (Mme.)  
Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (BR)  
Deuxième rapporteur de la commission des finances

(BR: Bloc républicain)

**BOLIVIA – BOLIVIE**

MENDOZA LEIGUE, Adolfo (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (MAS-IPSP)

RUIZ FLORES, Martha (Ms.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (MAS-IPSP)

President of the Group

TICONA QUISPE, Alicia (Ms.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (MAS-IPSP)

ZUÑIGA ROJAS, Luis (Mr.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (CC)

PADILLA SOLIS, Clotilde (Ms.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (Creemos)

(MAS-IPSP: Movement for Socialism / Mouvement pour le socialisme )

(CC: Comunidad Ciudadana)

(CREEMOS)

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE**

SOFTIC, Safet (Mr.)

Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia &  
Herzegovina

Leader of the delegation

MEHMEDOVSKI, Enida (Ms.)

Secretary to the delegation

**BOTSWANA**

MAKWINJA, Nnaniki W.T. (Ms.)

Member of the National Assembly (BDP)

Leader of the delegation

KEORAPETSE, Dithapelo L. (Mr.)

Member of the National Assembly (UDC)

LETSHOLO, Thapelo (Mr.)

Member of the National Assembly (BDP)

SAUBI, Babui (Ms.)

Principal Clerk Assistant I (Parliamentary Committees)

Secretary to the delegation

(UDC: Umbrella for Democratic Change / Collectif pour le changement démocratique)

(BDP: Botswana Democratic Party / Parti démocratique botswanais)

**BRAZIL – BRESIL**

LINS, Átila (Mr.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PP)

Leader of the Delegation

President of the Committee on National Integration,  
Regional Development and the Amazon

Bureau, Standing Committee on UN Affairs

CUNHA, Sergio (Mr.)

Member of the Federal Senate (PSD)

NOGUEIRA LIMA, Eliane (Ms.)

Member of the Federal Senate (PP)

PORTELLA, Iracema (Ms.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PP)

RIBEIRO, Daniella (Ms.)

Member of the Federal Senate (PP)

SILVESTRE FILHO, Irajá (Mr.)

Member of the Federal Senate (PSD)

ROCHA, Jose (Mr.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PL)

CAMPOS, Jefferson (Mr.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies

ARAUJO, Silvia (Ms.)

Coordinator, Federal Senate

ALBUQUERQUE, Ana (Ms.)

Chamber of Deputies

Secretary of the Group

OLIVERA, Nadja (Ms.)

Chamber of Deputies

(PP: Progressive Party / Parti progressiste)

(PSD: Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate)

(PSDB: Brazilian Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate brésilien )

(PL: Liberal Party / Parti libéral)

**BURKINA FASO**

BASSIERE, Bation Nestor (M.)	Vice-Président de l'Assemblée nationale (UNIR/PS)
OUATTARA, Lassina (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (MPP)
YE, Luc (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (MPP)
DIALLO, Ahmed Aziz (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (PDS/METBA)
KOMBOIGO, W. Eddie Constance Hyacinthe (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (CDP)
OUEDRAOGO, Zounongo Nafissatou (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (MPP)
MEDAH, Manignan Roxane Adams (Mme.)	Directrice
Secrétaire de la délégation	

(Unir/PS: Union pour la Renaissance/Parti Sankariste)

(MPP: People's Movement for Progress / Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès)

(PDS/METBA: Party for Democracy and Socialism-Builders' Party / Parti pour la démocratie et le Socialisme-Parti des Bâtisseurs)

(CDP: Congress for Democracy and Progress / Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès)

**BURUNDI**

SINZOHAGERA, Emmanuel (Mr.)	President of the Senate
Leader of the delegation	
GASUNZU, Pascal (M.)	Member of the Senate
NITERETSE, Spéciose (Mme.)	Member of the Senate
HARERIMANA, Jeanne Chantal (Mme.)	Secretary General, National Assembly
Member of the ASGP	
NIYONZIMA, Renovat (M.)	Secretary General, Senate
Member of the ASGP	
BUGAGA, Gabby (Mr.)	Spokesperson for the President of the Senate
KAVUYE, Aimable (Mr.)	Protocol to the President of the Senate

**CABO VERDE**

CORREIA, Austelino Tavares (Mr.)	Speaker of the National Assembly (MPD)
President of the Group, Leader of the Delegation	
MONTEIRO DE PINA, Alcides (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (MPD)
MONTEIRO RAMOS, Eveline Nair (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (PAICV)
MONTEIRO DE ANDRADE LOPES, Leila Leonor (Ms.)	Executive Secretary to the Speaker

(MPD: Movement for Democracy / Mouvement pour la démocratie)

(PAICV: African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde / Parti africain pour l'indépendance du Cabo Verde)

**CAMBODIA – CAMBODGE**

YANG, Sem (Mr.)	Member of the Senate
Leader of the delegation	Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, Complaint Reception, Investigation
CHHIT, Kimyeat (Mr.)	Member of the Senate
	Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, Information and Media
	Secretary General, Senate
OUM, Sarith (Mr.)	
Member of the ASGP	
KIM YEAT, Dararith (Mr.)	Executive Director of the Parliamentary Centre of Asia
Member of the ASGP	
KIM, Sochetra (Mr.)	Deputy Director General of Research of the Senate
KOY, Malayvireak (Mr.)	Director of International Relations Department of the Senate
SENG, Thy (Mr.)	Chief of International Relations Office of the National Assembly
Secretary to the delegation	
HENG, Sonya (Mr.)	Staff of the Parliamentary Centre of Asia

**CAMEROON – CAMEROUN**

NIAT NJIFENJI, Marcel (M.)	Président du Sénat (RDPC)
Chef de la délégation	
HANGLOS TJOUES, Geneviève (Mme.)	Vice-Présidente du Sénat (RDPC)
AHIDJO, Oumoul Koulthoumi (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (RDPC)
EMAH ETOUNDI, Vincent De Paul (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (RDPC)

EBANGHA NTUI, Johanna (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (RDPC)
NKEZE KALEBONG, Emilia (Mme.)	Membre du Sénat (SDF)
ZANG OYONO, Calvin (M.)	Membre du Sénat (RDPC)
KOMBA, Gaston (M.)	Secrétaire général de l'Assemblée nationale
Membre de l'ASGP	
MEVA'A m'EBOUTOU, Michel (M.)	Secrétaire général du Sénat
Membre de l'ASGP	
MVONDO, Médard (M.)	Directeur de l'Administration générale, Assemblée nationale
Secrétaire administratif	
NJOMATCHOUA, Justin (M.)	Directeur du Cabinet du Président du Sénat
MEDOUANE AWOLE ETOGA, Edwige Ursule (Mme.)	Conseillère
NDO ABOLO, Daniel Kevin (M.)	Conseiller

(RDPC: Cameroon People's Democratic Movement / Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais)

(SDF: Social Democratic Front / Front social démocratique)

### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC - REPUBLIQUE CENTRAFRICAINE

NGAMANA, Evariste (M.)	Vice-Président de l'Assemblée nationale (MCU)
PATASSE, Marie Christiane (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (NEC)

(MCU: United Hearts Movement / Mouvement des Cœurs Unis)

(NEC: Nouvel Elan de Centrafrique)

### CHILE – CHILI

FLORES, Iván (Mr.)	Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies (PDC)
Second Vice President of GRULAC,	President of the Internal Regime and Administration Committee
Leader of the delegation	
COLOMA, Juan Antonio (Mr.)	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (UDI)
President of the IPU Group	Constitution, Legislation and Justice Committee
LETIELIER, Juan Pablo (Mr.)	Member of the Senate (PS)
Member of the Executive Committee	President of the Treasury Committee
Sub-Committee on Finance	
MIX, Claudia (Ms.)	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (Com)
Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Human Rights and Native Peoples Committee
	Committee on Social Development, Overcoming Poverty and Planning
	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (RN)
GARCÍA, René Manuel (Mr.)	
Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and International Security	
LANDEROS, Miguel (Mr.)	Secretary General, Chamber of Deputies
Member of the ASGP	
BUSTOS LATORRE, Roberto (Mr.)	Deputy Secretary General, Senate
Member of the ASGP	
PEILLARD, Jacqueline (Ms.)	Director International Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies

(PDC : Christian Democratic Party / Parti démocrate-chrétien)

(UDI : Independent Democratic Union / Union démocratique indépendante)

(PS : Socialist Party / Parti socialiste)

(Com : Comunes)

(RN : National Renewal / Renouveau national)

### CROATIA – CROATIE

ĆELIĆ, Ivan (Mr.)	Member of the Croatian Parliament (HDZ)
Leader of the delegation	Deputy Chairperson of the Health and Social Policy Committee
MARTINČEVIĆ, Natalija (Ms.)	Member of the Croatian Parliament (NS)
VUKAS, Stjepan (Mr.)	Advisor, Croatian Parliament
Secretary of Group	
Member of the ASGP	

(HDZ : Croatian Democratic Union / Parti démocratique croate)

(NS: People's Party - Reformists)

**CUBA**

FERRER GÓMEZ, María Yolanda (Ms.)  
President of the Group, Leader of the delegation

LUNA MORALES, Estela Cristina (Ms.)  
Advisory Group on Health

GONZÁLEZ PATRICIO, Rolando Miguel (Mr.)

MORA GONZÁLEZ, Jesús Rafael (Mr.)  
Secretary of the Group  
CABALLERO RODRIGUEZ, Eumelio (Mr.)  
Ambassador/Permanent Representative

Member of the National Assembly of the People's Power (CPC)

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Member of the National Assembly of the People's Power Health and Sports Committee (CPC)

Member of the National Assembly of the People's Power (CPC)

Vice Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Officer, National Assembly of the People's Power

(CPC: Communist Party of Cuba / Parti communiste cubain)

**CYPRUS – CHYPRE**

NEOFYTOS, Averof (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation

GAROYAN, MARIOS (Mr.)  
ATTALIDES, Alexandra (Ms.)  
CHRISTOU, Avgousta (Ms.)  
Secretary to the delegation  
KOULLAPIS, Kostas (Mr.)  
Secretary to the delegation

Member of the House of Representatives (DISY)

House Standing Committee on Financial and Budgetary Affairs

Member of the House of Representatives (DIPA)

Member of the House of Representatives (KOP)

Senior International Relations Officer, House of Representatives

International Relations Officer, House of Representatives

(DISY: Democratic Rally Party / Rassemblement démocratique)

(KOP: Cyprus Greens-Citizens' Cooperation / Parti vert de Chypre)

(DIPA: Democratic Alignment / Front démocratique)

**CZECH REPUBLIC – REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE**

HORSKÁ, Miluše (Ms.)  
NYTRA, Zdenek (Mr.)  
PETŘÍK, Milan (Mr.)  
TUČKOVÁ, Alena (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group

Member of the Senate

Member of the Senate

International Relations Department, Senate

(ODS: Civic Democratic Party / Parti démocrate civique)

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO**

MUNDELA, Eddy (M.)  
Président du Groupe, Chef de la délégation  
FURAH MUYUMBA, Francine (Mme.)

Premier Vice-président du Sénat (UDPS)

Sénatrice, Présidente de la Commission permanente des relations extérieures (PPRD)

Sénateur (MLC)

Sénateur

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale, Expert en développement durable

Conseiller Coordonnateur du Bureau d'études du Sénat

TSHIALA MAYEMBE, Célestin (M.)  
Secrétaire administratif du Groupe  
TSHIYAYA, Francis (M.)

Secrétaire particulier du Premier Vice-Président du Sénat

NZANGA, Louise Ramazani (Ms.)  
Ambassador

(UDPS: Union for Democracy and Social Progress / Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès social)

(PPRD: People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy / Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie)

(MLC: Movement for the Liberation of Congo / Mouvement de Libération du Congo)

**DENMARK – DANEMARK**

SOENDERGAARD, Soeren (Mr.) Leader of the Delegation	Member of the Danish Parliament (EL) Cultural Affairs Committee European Affairs Committee
HEITMANN, Jane (Ms.)	Member of the Danish Parliament (V)
OEKTEM, Fatma (Ms.)	Member of the Danish Parliament (V)
SCHMIDT, Hans Christian (Mr.)	Member of the Danish Parliament (V) Vice Chairman of the Transport and Housing Committee Cultural Affairs Committee
VALENTIN, Kim (Mr.)	Member of the Danish Parliament (V) Cultural Affairs Committee European Affairs Committee
LARSON, Claudius (Mr.)	Higher Executive Officer, Danish Parliament
RIIS, Peter (Mr.) Secretary	International Consultant, Danish Parliament

(EL: The Red-Green Alliance / Unité-Alliance rouge-verte)

(V: Liberal Party / Parti libéral)

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC – REPUBLIQUE DOMINICAINE**

FERNANDEZ, Maria Mercedes (Ms.)	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PLD)
POLANCO, Rosendy Joel (Mr.)	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PRM)

PLD: (Partido de la Liberación Dominicana)

PRM: (Partido Revolucionario Moderno)

**ECUADOR – EQUATEUR**

ANDRADE MUÑOZ, Wilma (Ms.) Leader of the delegation Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Member of the National Assembly (ID)
MUÑOZ, Pabel (Mr.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	Member of the National Assembly (UNES)
CAMPAIN, Rina (Ms.) Working Group on Science and Technology	Member of the National Assembly (CREO)
NOBOA, Daniel (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly
ABEDRABBO, Amira (Ms.) Secretary to the delegation	International Relations Specialist
GELLIBERT, Cynthia	Adviser
PESANTES, Ana María (Ms.)	Adviser

(ID: Izquierda democrática)

(UNES: Unión por la esperanza)

(CREO: Creando Oportunidades)

**EGYPT – EGYPTÉ**

EL GEBALY, Hanafi Ali (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the House of Representatives
DARWISH, Karim (Mr.)	Member of the House of Representatives (MW) Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee
ATTIA, Sahar (Ms.) Vice-Chair, Working Group on Science and Technology	Member of the House of Representatives
NASSIF, Aida (Ms.) Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Member of the Senate (MW)
SAAD, Ragia (Ms.)	Member of the House of Representatives
MANAA, Ahmed (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary General
NOUR ELDEEN, Haytham (Mr.)	Director, House of Representatives

(MW: Nation's Future Party / Parti de l'avenir de la nation (Mostakbal Watan))

**EQUATORIAL GUINEA – GUINEE EQUATORIALE**

NTUGU NSA, Atanasio-Ela (Mr.)  
OBONO EDJANG, Silvia-Paloma (Ms.)

Member of the Senate (PDGE)  
Member of the Senate (PDGE)

(PDGE: Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea / Parti Démocratique de Guinée Equatoriale)

**ESTONIA – ESTONIE**

KIVIMÄGI, Toomas (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
TUUS-LAUL, Marika (Ms.)

Member of the Estonian Parliament (RP)  
Deputy Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee  
Member of the Estonian Parliament (EceP)  
Social Affairs Committee  
Secretary General

HABICHT, Antero (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
SEPP, Regina (Ms.)  
Secretary to the delegation

Staff

(RP : Estonian Reform Party / Parti de la réforme)

(SD : Estonian Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate estonien)

(EKRE : Conservative People's Party of Estonia / Parti populaire conservateur)

(EceP : Estonian Centre Party / Parti estonien du centre)

**ESWATINI**

BUJELA, Nokunceda (Ms.)  
Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

Member of the House of Assembly

**FINLAND – FINLANDE**

JÄRVINEN, Heli (Ms.)  
President of the Group  
Leader of the delegation  
Rapporteur to the Standing Committee on Sustainable  
Development

Member of Parliament (G)

TYNKKYNEN, Sebastian (Mr.)  
Vice-President of the Group

Member of Parliament (PS)

KALMARI, Anne (Ms.)  
LÖFSTRÖM, Mats (Mr.)  
TANUS, Sari (Ms.)

Member of Parliament (CP)  
Member of Parliament (RKP)  
Member of Parliament (PDC)  
Member of Parliament (KoK)

EESTILÄ, Markku (Mr.)  
HUTTUNEN, Marja (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group  
VUOSIO, Teemu (Mr.)  
Secretary of the Group

Assistant for the International Affairs, Parliament  
Secretary for the International Affairs, Parliament

(G : The Greens / Les Verts)

(PS : The Finns Party / Parti des Finlandais)

(CP : Centre Party / Parti du Centre)

(RKP : Swedish People's Party / Parti populaire suédois)

(PDC : Christian Democratic Party / Parti démocrate-chrétien)

(KoK : National Coalition Party / Parti de la coalition nationale)

**FRANCE**

JULIEN-LAFERRIERE, Hubert (M.)  
Chef de la délégation  
Comité sur les questions relatives au Moyen-Orient  
DUMONT, Laurence (Mme.)

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (EELV)  
Commission des affaires étrangères

Comité des droits de l'homme des parlementaires

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (PS)

BLANC, Etienne (M.)

Sénateur (LR)

MARIE, Didier (M.)

Sénateur (PS)

Commission permanente de la démocratie et des droits  
de l'homme

LARIVE, Michel (M.)

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (FI)

Président du Groupe de travail sur la science et la  
technologie

RIOTTON, Véronique (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (LREM)
Bureau des femmes parlementaires	
BAY, Marianne (Mme.)	Secrétaire général du Sénat
Membre de l'ASGP	
VANCE, Loïc (M.)	Conseiller, Sénat
Secrétaire exécutif du Groupe	
SADOUN, Mohamed (M.)	Conseiller, Assemblée nationale
TAVERNIER, Eric (M.)	Conseiller, Sénat
PREUVOT, Perrine (Ms./Mme)	Administratrice des services, Assemblée nationale
Secrétaire administrative de l'ASGP	
VELASCO, Karine (Ms./Mme)	Conseillère, Assemblée nationale
Secrétaire administrative de l'ASGP	

(EELV: Ecologic Europe, the Greens / Europe Ecologie, les Verts)

(PS : Socialist Party / Parti Socialiste)

(LR : The Republicans / Les Républicains)

(FI : La France insoumise)

(LREM : The Republic on the Move / La République en Marche)

**GABON**

NDOUMA MBADINGA Jean Victor (M.)	Membre du Sénat
Chef de la délégation	
NGABIKOUMOU WADA MESMIN MESMIN, Boris (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale
BEKALLE AKWE, Henri (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale
Commission permanente de la démocratie et des droits de l'homme	
SAKOUSOU, Felicite (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale
NDONG OBAME, Serges (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale
NTOUTOUME, Aurelien (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale
MAKOMBO NEMBE, Magaly (M.)	Conseiller juridique

**GAMBIA (THE) – GAMBIE**

TUNKARA, Billay G. (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (NPP)
Leader of the delegation	
MAJANKO, Samusa (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (NCP)
SECKA SALLAH, Ndey Yassin (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly
NYASSI, Musa Amul (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (APRC)
MBOWE, Mamat (Mr.)	Editor, National Assembly
Secretary to Delegation	

(NPP : National People Party / Parti populaire national)

(NCP : National Conversion Party / Parti national de la conversion)

(APRC : Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction / Alliance patriotique pour la réorientation et la construction )

**GEORGIA – GEORGIE**

KUCHAVA, Kakha (Mr.)	Speaker of Parliament (GD)
Leader of the delegation	
SAMKHARADZE, Nikoloz (Mr.)	Member of Parliament (GD)
RAKVIASHVILI, Aleksandre (Mr.)	Member of Parliament (Girtchi)
TSILOSANI, Khatia (Ms.)	Member of Parliament (GD)
BROKISHVILI, Irakli (Mr.)	Chief Specialist, International Relations Department, Parliament
Secretary to the Delegation	
CHUBINIDZE, Tea (Ms.)	Adviser
KOLBAIA, Tamar (Ms.)	Director
MAKHASHVILI, Levan (Mr.)	Deputy Head of the Speaker's Cabinet

(GD-DG: Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia / Rêve géorgien – Géorgie démocratique)

(Girtchi: Girtchi Party)

**GERMANY – ALLEMAGNE**

WADEPHUL, Johann (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of the German Bundestag (CDU/CSU) Deputy Chairman of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group for Foreign Affairs, Defence Policy and Council of Europe
WALTER-ROSENHEIMER, Beate (Ms.)	Member of the German Bundestag (Bündnis90/Die Grünen)
MANSMANN, Till (Mr.)	Member of the German Bundestag (FDP)
LECHTE, Ulrich (Mr.)	Member of the German Bundestag (FDP)
Forum of Young Parliamentarians	
MÜLLER, Lorenz (Mr.)	Secretary General of the German Bundestag
Member of the ASGP	
KLEEMAN, Georg (Mr.)	Deputy Secretary General of the Federal Council
Member of the ASGP	
ZÁDOR, Katalin (Ms.)	International Parliamentary Assemblies Department, German Bundestag
Secretary to the Delegation	International Parliamentary Assemblies Department, German Bundestag
BRAMMER, Claudia (Ms.)	
Assistant to the delegation	
DOLD, Wolfgang (Mr.)	
Ambassador	
(CDU/CSU : Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union / Union chrétienne démocrate/Union chrétienne sociale)	
(Bündnis90/Die Grünen: Green Party / Les Verts)	
(FDP: Free Democratic Party / Parti libéral-démocrate)	

**GHANA**

KYEI-MENSAH-BONSU, Osei (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of Parliament Chairman of the Special Budget Committee Chairman of the House Committee Chairman of the Business Committee (NPP)
Gomashie Abl Dzifa, (Ms.)	Member of Parliament (NDC)
IDDRISU, Haruna (Mr.)	Member of Parliament Vice Chairperson of the special Budget Committee Business Committee Appointment Committee (NDC)
IDDRISU, Habib (Mr.)	Member of Parliament, Majority Deputy Whip (NPP)
CUDJOE GHANSAH, Comfort (Ms.)	Member of Parliament, Minority Deputy Whip (NDC)
KWABENA OTENG, Nsiah Cyril (Mr.)	Secretary General
Member of the ASGP	
GOMBILLA, Ibrahim (Mr.)	Deputy Clerk, Committee, Parliamentary Relations & Protocol & Public Affairs, Parliament
Member of the ASGP	Director
ACHEAMPONG, Richard Kwame (Mr.)	
Member of the ASGP	
YENDAW, Fredrik (Mr.)	Assistant Director
Member of the ASGP	
(NPP : New Patriotic Party / Nouveau parti patriotique)	
(NDC : National Democratic Congress / Congrès démocratique national)	

**GREECE – GRECE**

GKIKAS, Stefanos (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of the Hellenic Parliament (ND) Standing Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs Special Standing Committee on Armament Programs and Contracts Committee on Parliament's Finances
GIOGIAKAS, Vassileios (Mr.)	Member of the Hellenic Parliament (ND) Standing Committee on Social Affairs Standing Committee on Production and Trade Special Permanent Committee of the Regions
KAFANTARI, Charoula (Ms.)	Member of the Hellenic Parliament (SYRIZA)
GEORGIOU, Mylonakis (Mr.)	Secretary General of the Hellenic Parliament
Member of the ASGP	
PAPADOPOULOU, Thaleia (Ms.)	
TSOUNI, Foteini (Ms.)	Secretary, Hellenic Parliament

(ND : New Democracy / Nouvelle démocratie)  
(SYRIZA : Coalition of the Radical Left / Coalition de la gauche radicale )



**GUINEA-BISSAU – GUINEE-BISSAU**

COSTA PEREIRA, Maria Paula (Mme.) Chef de la délégation	Vice-Présidente de l'Assemblée nationale populaire (PAIGC)
DJALO NANDIGNA, Maria Adiatu (Mme.) Chef de la délégation	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale populaire (PAIGC)

(PAIGC: Parti africain pour l'indépendance de la Guinée et du Cap-Vert)

**HUNGARY – HONGRIE**

BALLA, Mihály (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of the National Assembly (FIDESz) Vice-Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee
BARTOS, Mónika (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (FIDESz) Committee on Legislation Committee on Foreign Affairs
GURMAI, Zita (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (MSZP) Committee on Foreign Affairs
VADAI, Ágnes (Ms.) President of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism	Member of the National Assembly (DK) Vice Chair of the Committee on Defence and Law Enforcement
KOCSIS-CAKE, Olivio (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (P) Vice Chairman of the Committee on Immunity
SOMFAINÉ ÁDÁM, Katalin (Ms.) Secretary of the Group	Head of IPU Office, Directorate for Foreign Relations, National Assembly

(FIDESz: Hungarian Civic Union / Union civique hongroise)  
 (KDNP: Christian Democratic People's Party / Parti populaire chrétien-démocrate)  
 (Jobbik: Movement for a Better Hungary / Mouvement pour une meilleure Hongrie)  
 (MSZP: Hungarian Socialist Party / Parti socialiste hongrois)  
 (DK: Democratic Coalition / Coalition démocratique)  
 (LMP: Politics can be different / Faire de la politique autrement)  
 (P: Párbeszéd)

**ICELAND – ISLANDE**

GUNNLAUGSSON, Sigmundur Davíð (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of Parliament (CP)
BANG, Arna Gerður (Ms./Mme.) Secretary of the Group	Adviser, Parliament

(CP: Centre Party / Parti du Centre)

**INDIA – INDE**

MAHTAB, Bhartruhari (Mr.) Leader of the delegation Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and International Security	Member of the House of the People (BJD)
DAYAL RAM, Vishnu (Mr.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	Member of the House of the People (BJP)
JAISWAL, Sanjay (Mr.) Advisory Group on Health	Member of the House of the People (BJP)
KUMARI, Diya (Ms.) Bureau, Standing Committee on UN Affairs	Member of the House of the People (BJP)
MAADAM, Poonamben (Ms.) Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Member of the House of the People (BJP)
PATRA, Sasmit (Mr.) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, Rapporteur to the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	Member of the Council of States (BJD)
KUMAR, Ajay (Mr.)	Chief of Protocol and Joint Secretary, House of the People
TIWARI, Mahesh (Mr.)	Joint Secretary, Council of States

RAMANA, Lingala Venkata (Mr.)  
Delegation Coordinator  
SINGH, Yogendra (Mr.)  
KUMAR, Goutam (Mr.)

Director, House of the People  
Deputy Secretary, House of the People  
Deputy Secretary, Council of States

(BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party / Parti Bharatiya Janata)  
(BJD: Biju Janata Dal)

## INDONESIA – INDONESIE

MAHARANI, Puan (Ms.)  
Leader of the delegation  
HONORIS, Charles (Mr.)  
ZON, Fadli (Mr.)  
Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and  
International Security  
SERA, Mardani Ali (Mr.)

Speaker of the House of Representatives (PDI-P)  
Member of the House of Representatives (PDI-P)  
Member of the House of Representatives (Gerindra)  
Chair of the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary  
Cooperation  
Member of the House of Representatives (PKS)  
Vice-Chair of the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary  
Cooperation  
Member of the House of Representatives (PD)  
Vice-Chair of the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary  
Cooperation  
Member of the House of Representatives (PAN)  
Vice-Chair of the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary  
Cooperation  
Member of the House of Representatives (GOLKAR)

RUDANA, Putu Supadma (Mr.)

TOHIR, Achmad Hafidz (Mr.)

KOMARUDIN, Puteri Anetta (Ms.)  
Bureau of Women Parliamentarians  
SYAMSUDDIN, Didi Irawadi (Mr.)  
ISKANDAR, Indra (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
SOETIKNO, Toferry Primanda (Mr.)  
Adviser to the Head of the Delegation  
DIANTI, Elvira (Ms.)  
Secretary to the delegation  
WIJAYANTI, Amelia (Ms.)  
Adviser to the delegation  
NAJIB, Muhammad (Mr.)  
Ambassador

Member of the House of Representatives (PD)  
Secretary General

(PDI-P: Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle / Parti démocrate indonésien en lutte)  
(Gerindra : Great Indonesia Movement Party / Mouvement pour une grande Indonésie)  
(PKS : Justice and Prosperous Party / Parti de la justice et de la prospérité)  
(PD : Democratic Party / Parti démocratique)  
(PAN : National Mandate Party / Parti du populaire national)  
GOLKAR

## IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF) – IRAN (REPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE D')

NIKZAD SAMARIN, Ali (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
NADERI, Hamad (Mr.)  
Head of the IPU Group  
Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and  
International Security  
AGHA TEHRANI, Morteza (Mr.)  
ZARE, Rahim (Mr.)  
ABOULHASSANI CHIMEH, Jalal (Mr.)

Deputy Speaker of the Islamic Parliament of Iran

Member of the Islamic Parliament of Iran

Member of the Islamic Parliament of Iran  
Member of the Islamic Parliament of Iran  
Director of Foreign Missions of the Protocol Department,  
Islamic Parliament of Iran  
Senior Expert of Department of Protocol, Islamic  
Parliament of Iran  
Adviser  
Adviser  
Adviser  
Adviser

SHARIFI, Seyed Mostafa (Mr.)  
Secretary of the delegation  
ALAMATI, Hamed  
ERFANIAN, Hossein (Mr.)  
KIANPOUR, Vahid (Mr.)  
MONAZZAM, Saeid (Mr.)  
GHASHGHAVI, Hassan (Mr.)  
Ambassador

**IRELAND – IRLANDE**

O'REILLY, Joe (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives (FG)
FARRELL, Mairéad (Ms.)	Member of the House of Representatives (SF)
NAUGHTEN, Denis (Mr.) Working Group on Science and Technology	Member of the House of Representatives
O'SULLIVAN, Pádraig (Mr.)	Member of the House of Representatives (FF)
PRUNTY, Brian (Mr.) Secretary to the delegation	Adviser
(FG: Fine Gael )	
(SF: Sinn Féinn)	
(FF: Fianna Fáil )	

**ISRAEL**

DICHTER, Avi (Mr.) Leader of the delegation Committee on Middle East Questions	Member of Parliament (Likud)
ROFFE OFIR, Sharon (Ms.) RETTMAN, Hanan (Ms.) Acting Secretary to the delegation	Member of Parliament (IB)
(Likud: Conservative / Conservateur)	
(IB: Israel Beiteinu)	

**ITALY – ITALIE**

CASINI, Pier Ferdinando (Mr.) IPU Honorary President President of the Group Leader of the delegation	Member of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee
GRANDE, Marta (Ms.) Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Member of the Chamber of Deputies Foreign Affairs Committee (M5s)
FANTINATI, Mattia (Mr.)	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (M5s)
MIGLIORE, Gennaro (Mr.) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (IV) Foreign Affairs Committee
Committee on Middle East Questions QUARTAPELLE PROCOPIO, Lia (Ms.) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PD) Foreign Affairs Committee
Group of Facilitators for Cyprus SORBELLO, Roberto (Mr.) Secretary General of the Group	Adviser, Chamber of Deputies
RADONI, Susanna (Ms.) Secretary of the Italian IPU Group	Official, Protocol, Chamber of Deputies
GUARIGLIA, Riccardo (Mr.) Ambassador	
(M5S: Movimento 5 Stelle / Five Stars Movement / Mouvement Cinq Etoiles)	
(PD: Partito Democratico / Democratic Party / Parti Démocrate)	
(IV: Italia Viva)	

**KAZAKHSTAN**

YERMAN, Mukhtar (Mr.)	Member of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Nur Otan) Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs, Defence and Security
ZHIGALOV, Konstantin (Mr.) Ambassador	
(Nur Otan : People's Democratic Party "Nur Otan" / Parti populaire et démocratique "Nur Otan")	

**KENYA**

LUSAKA, Kenneth (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the Senate Chairperson of the Senate Business Committee
KASANGA, Sylvia (Ms.) Working Group on Science and Technology	Member of the Senate (WDM-K)
ODUOL, Jacqueline (Ms.) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism	Member of the National Assembly (ODM) National Cohesion and Equal Opportunities Departmental Committee on Sports, Culture and Tourism
Rapporteur to the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights	
LESUUDA, Naisula (Ms.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	Member of the National Assembly (JP) Chairperson of the Sessional Committee on Regional Integration Budget and Appropriations Committee Member of Parliament (JP)
KIARIE, John Wawedu (Mr.) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law	
NYEGENYE, Jeremiah (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Clerk of the Senate
OMOLLOH, Roselynn (Ms.) KIRUI, Kipkemai Arap (Mr.) Secretary to the delegation	Director, Senate Deputy Director, National Assembly
OSUNDWA, Lillian (Ms.) CHEKWANDA, Ben Solomon (Mr.)	Parliamentary Officer (Clerk Assistant) Research Officer, Speaker's Office, Senate
(WDM-K : Wiper Democratic Movement / Mouvement démocratique Wiper)	
(ODM : Orange Democratic Movement / Mouvement démocratique orange)	
(JP : Jubilee Party / Parti Jubilee)	
(PDR : Party for Development and Reform / Parti pour le développement et la réforme)	

**KUWAIT – KOWEIT**

ALGHANIM, Marzouq (Mr.) President of the Group	Speaker of the National Assembly
ALAZEMI, Salman (Mr.) AL MUTAR, Hamad (Mr.) ALMUNAWER, Osama (Mr.) ALMUTAIRI, Abaid (Mr.) ALMUTAIRI, Fayez (Mr.) ALLOUGHANI, Adel (Mr.) ALNUSIF, Jasem (Mr.) ALDOWAIHI, Nasser (Mr.) ALHARBAN, Talal (Mr.) ABDULLAH, Amer (Mr.) ALAJMI, Mobarak (Mr.) ALBEHBEHANI, Ahmed (Mr.) Secretary of the delegation	Member of the National Assembly Member of the National Assembly Member of the National Assembly Member of the National Assembly Member of the National Assembly Secretary General of the National Assembly of Kuwait Secretary General of the Arab ASGP Head of the Media Section, National Assembly Head of the IPU Affairs Section, National Assembly Director Head Section of Protocol, National Assembly Political Researcher – IPU Affairs Section at the National Assembly of Kuwait Political Researcher – Inter-Parliamentary Organization Department, National Assembly Adviser
ALSUBAIE, Sara (Ms.)	
ALZAMEL, Hessah (Ms.) ALSAIDI, Ayadah (Mr.) Ambassador	

**LATVIA – LETTONIE**

DAUDZE, Gundars (Mr.) President of the Group, Leader of the delegation	Member of Parliament (ZZS) Legal Affairs Committee Secretary of the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee
DOMBROVSKIS, Vjaceslavs (Mr.) TEIRUMNIEKS, Edmunds (Mr.)	Member of Parliament (I) Member of Parliament (NA) Social and Employment Matters Committee Secretary of the Sustainable Development Committee Head of the Interparliamentary Relations Bureau, Parliament
PAURA, Sandra (Ms.) Secretary of the Group	
KLISANS, Maris (Mr.) Ambassador	
(ZZS: Union of Farmers and Greens / Union des Verts et des paysans)	
(NA : National Alliance / Alliance nationale)	
(I : Independent)	

**LEBANON – LIBAN**

FERZLI, Elie (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

**LIECHTENSTEIN**

FRICK, Albert (Mr.)  
President of the Group, Leader of the delegation  
BÜHLER-NIGSCH, Dagmar (Ms.)  
WACHTER, Gabriele (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group

Speaker of the Diet (FBP)  
Member of the Diet (VU)  
Secretary, Diet

(FBP : Progressive Peoples Party / Parti des citoyens progressistes)  
(VU : Patriotic Union / Union patriotique)

**LITHUANIA – LITUANIE**

BUROKIENE, Guoda (Ms./Mme)  
Leader of the Delegation

Member of Parliament (LVZS)  
Chair of the Committee on State Administration and  
Local Authorities  
Member of Parliament (LRP)

PINSKUS, Jonas (Mr.)  
SKIRMANTIENĖ, Asta (Ms.)  
Secretary to the delegation

(LVZS : Lithuanian Peasant and Green Union / Union populaire des paysans de Lituanie )  
(LRP: Lithuanian Regions Party)

**LUXEMBOURG**

MUTSCH, Lydia (Mme.)  
Chef de la délégation  
TENNINA, Tania (Mme.)  
Secrétaire du Groupe

Membre de la Chambre des députés (LSAP)

(LSAP: Lëtzebuerger Sozialistes Aarbechterpartei)

**MADAGASCAR**

RAKOTOMALALA, Miarintsoa Andriantsitonta (M.)  
Chef de la délégation  
Forum des jeunes parlementaires  
RAZARINDRIATSARA, Johnson (M.)  
MAMIHAJA, Charlot (M.)  
RAKOTOARISOA, Nirina Fenohera Johnny (M.)  
RANDRIAMAHAFANJARY, Calvin (M.)  
Secrétaire du Groupe, Membre de l'ASGP

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale  
Président du Réseau des jeunes parlementaires de  
Madagascar  
Membre du Parlement  
Membre du Parlement  
Membre du Parlement  
Secrétaire de l'Assemblée nationale

(TGV: Tanora MalaGasy Vonona)

**MALAWI**

MLOMBWA, Claude Clement (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
JOLOBALA, Esther (Ms.)  
KANDODO, Kenny (Mr.)  
KAPICHILA MUSSA, Misolo (Mr.)  
MUSOWA, Victor (Mr.)  
KALEMBA, Fiona (Ms.)  
Member of the ASGP  
MWENYEHELI, Jeffrey (Mr.)  
Secretary to the delegation  
CHIKANDIRA, Nancy (Ms.)

Member of the National Assembly (MCP)

Member of the National Assembly (UDF)  
Member of the National Assembly (MCP)  
Member of the National Assembly (UDF)  
Member of the National Assembly (DPP)  
Clerk, National Assembly

Deputy Clerk of Parliament, National Assembly

Adviser

(MCP : Malawi Congress Party / Parti du Congrès du Malawi)  
(UDF : United Democratic Front / Front démocratique unifié)  
(DPP : Democratic Progressive Party / Parti démocratique progressiste)

**MALDIVES**

ABDULLA, Eva (Ms.) Leader of the delegation	Deputy Speaker of the People's Majlis (MDP)
HUSSAIN, Ali (Mr.)	Member of the People's Majlis (JP)
MUGHNEE, Abdul (Mr.)	Member of the People's Majlis (MDP)
THARIQ, Ahmed (Mr.)	Member of the People's Majlis (PPM)
WAHEED, Mariyam (Ms.) Secretary to the delegation	

(MDP : Maldivian Democratic Party / Parti démocratique des Maldives )

(JP: Jumhooree Party / Parti Jumhooree )

(PNC: People's National Congress / Congrès national populaire)

(PP: Progressive Party of Maldives / Parti progressiste des Maldives)

**MALTA – MALTE**

FARRUGIA, Angelo (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the House of Representatives
GALEA, Mario (Mr.)	Member of the House of Representatives (PN)
MIZZI, Joseph (Mr.)	Member of the House of Representatives (PL)
VELLA, Andre (Mr.) Secretary of the Group	Manager II (Research), House of Representatives

(PN : Partit Nazzjonalista)

(PL : Partit Laburista)

**MEXICO – Mexique**

CARVAJAL IZUNZA, Sofía (Ms.)	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PRI)
NÚÑEZ CERÓN, Saraí (Ms.) Advisory Group on Health	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PAN)
LÓPEZ CASTRO, Cynthia Iliana (Ms.)	Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PRI)
HERRERA, Mauricio Jesús (Mr.)	Adviser

(PRI : Institutional Revolutionary Party / Parti révolutionnaire institutionnel)

(PAN : National Action Party / Parti de l'Action nationale)

(Morena : National Regeneration Movement / Mouvement de la régénération nationale)

**MONACO**

NOTARI, Fabrice (M.) Chef de la délégation	Membre du Conseil national (PM)
Président du Groupe	Président de la Commission pour le suivi de la négociation avec l'Union Européenne
Commission permanente du développement durable	
GRISOUL, Marine (Mme.)	Membre du Conseil national (PM)

(PM: Primo! Monaco as Priority / Primo! Priorité Monaco)

(HM: Monaco Horizon / Horizon Monaco)

**MONGOLIA – MONGOLIE**

SANDAG, Byambatsogt (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of the Ulsiin Ih Hural (State Great Hural)
NYAM-OSOR, Uchral (Mr.) Bureau, Standing Committee on UN Affairs	Member of the Ulsiin Ih Hural (State Great Hural)
JAMIYANKHORLOO, Sukhbaatar (Mr.)	Member of the Ulsiin Ih Hural (State Great Hural)
TSERENPIL, Davaasuren (Mr.)	Member of the Ulsiin Ih Hural (State Great Hural)
LUVSANDORJ, Ulziisaikhan (Ms.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary General of the Ulsiin Ih Hural (State Great Hural)
MARUUSH, Batbold (Mr.)	Secretary
ERDENE-OCHIR, Anujin (Ms.)	Secretary

**MONTENEGRO**

BOGAVAC, Jovanka (Ms.) Leader of the delegation	Member of Parliament (PZP)
SEPANOVIC, Marta (Ms.)	Member of Parliament (DPS)
SEHOVIC, Damir (Mr.)	Member of Parliament (SD)
VUJOVIC, Tamara (Ms.)	Member of Parliament (Dem)
GRDINIĆ, Lidija (Ms.) Member of the ASGP	Deputy Secretary General
VUKOVIC SEKULOVIC, Milena (Ms.) Member of the ASGP	Deputy Secretary General
CABARKAPA, Vanja (Ms.) Deputy Secretary to the delegation	
MIHAJLOVIĆ, Milena (Ms.)	Adviser
ROSANDIĆ, Tijana (Ms.)	Adviser

(PZP: Movement for Change)  
(DPS: Democratic Party of Socialists)  
(SD: Social Democrats of Montenegro)  
(Dem: Democrats of Montenegro)

**MOROCCO – MAROC**

TALBI EL ALAMI, Rachid (M.) Président du Groupe, Chef de la délégation	Président de la Chambre des Représentants (RNI)
MIYARA, Enaam (M.) Président du Groupe, Chef de la délégation	Président de la Chambre des Conseillers (PI)
BENMASSOUD, Mohamed Salem (M.)	Membre de la Chambre des Conseillers (PI)
SLASSI, Khaddouj (Mme.)	Membre de la Chambre des Représentants (USFP)
TOUIZI, Ahmed (M.)	Membre de la Chambre des Conseillers (PAM)
EL KHADI, Najib (M.) Vice-Président de l'ASGP	Secrétaire général, Chambre des Représentants
SATRAOUY, Said (M.) Secrétaire administratif du Groupe	Chef de la Division des relations multilatérales, Chambre des Représentants
DRIOUCHE, Abdelwahad (M.) Secrétaire de la délégation	Conseiller général chargé de la diplomatie parlementaire, Chambre des Conseillers
GHAZI, Saad (M.)	Directeur, Chambre des Conseillers
CHAQRI, Ahmed (M.)	Chef de Cabinet du Président de la Chambre des Représentants
LAHNINI, Zakaria (M.)	Chef du Cabinet du Président de la Chambre des Conseillers

(RNI : Rassemblement national des indépendants)  
(PI : Istiqlal Party / Parti Istiqlal)  
(USFP : Socialist Union of Popular Forces / Union socialiste des forces populaires)  
(PAM : Authenticity and Modernity Party / Parti Authenticité et Modernité)

**MOZAMBIQUE**

MULEMBWE, Eduardo (Mr.) President of the Group, Leader of the delegation	Member of the Assembly of the Republic (FRELIMO)
MALEMA, Lucinda Bela (Ms.)	Member of the Assembly of the Republic (FRELIMO)
MUSSAGY, Gania (Ms.)	Vice Chairman of the Social Affairs Committee)
MANJATE, Narcisio (Mr.)	Member of the Assembly of the Republic (RENAMO)
Secretary of the Group, Member of the ASGP	
BONIFACIO, Cesar Joao (Mr.)	Director of Committee's Supporting Division, Assembly of the Republic
Secretary of the Group, Member of the ASGP	Adviser
CHAPO, João (Mr.)	Adviser
MADROBA, José (Mr.)	
VELHO, Victor (Mr.) Diplomatic corps	

(FRELIMO : Mozambique Liberation Front / Front de libération du Mozambique)  
(RENAMO : Mozambican National Resistance / Résistance nationale du Mozambique)

**NAMIBIA – NAMIBIE**

KATJAVIVI, Peter (Mr.) Leader of the delegation President of the Group Bureau, Standing Committee on UN Affairs	Speaker of the National Assembly Chairperson of the IPU; Standing Committee on Standing Rules and Orders and Internal Arrangements; Standing Committee on Privileges (SWAPO)
KAUMA, Victoria Mbawo (Ms.)	Vice-Chairperson of the National Council (SWAPO)
DIENDA, Elma Jane (Ms.)	Member of Parliament (PDM)
MASUA, Patience Tisha (Ms.)	Member of Parliament (SWAPO)
JANE, Efraim Gwai (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Deputy Secretary, National Council
KANDETU, Lydia (Ms.) Secretary, Member of the ASGP	Secretary, National Assembly
UIRAB, Simon Johannes (Mr.)	Director, Office of the Speaker
SHALI, Auguste Tegelela (Ms.)	Parliamentary Clerk, National Council
NGHILEENDELE, Ndaningaweni Protasius (Mr.) Secretary of the Group	Deputy Director, National Assembly

(SWAPO: South West Africa People's Organization / Organisation du peuple du Sud-Ouest africain)  
(PDM : Popular Democratic Movement / Mouvement démocratique populaire)

**NEPAL**

SAPKOTA, Rt.Hon Agni Prasad (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the House of Representatives
BANTAWA Rai, Agam Prasad (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly
CHAUDHARY, Laxmi Kumari (Ms.)	Member of the House of Representatives
GURUNG, Dev Prasad (Mr.)	Member of the House of Representatives
KUMARI, Pramila (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly
GAUTAM, Bharat Raj (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	General Secretary of the Federal Parliament
SEDHAI, Suresh Raj (Mr.)	Adviser
YOGI, Gopal Nath (Mr.) Secretary to the delegation	Secretary, House of Representatives
KHATRI K.C., Arjun (Mr.)	Adviser
ADHIKARI, Arjun (Mr.) Ambassador	

**NETHERLANDS – PAYS-BAS**

ATSMA, Joop (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of the Senate (CDA)
GERKENS, Arda (Ms.) Rapporteur to the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights	First Deputy Speaker of the Senate (PS)
GEERDINK, Paulien (Ms.) Working Group on Science and Technology	Member of the Senate (VVD)
RAVEN, Ton (Mr.)	Member of the Senate (OSF)
MULDER, Agnes (Ms.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	Member of the House of Representatives (CDA)
Forum of Women Parliamentarians	
ALSHARIFI, Farah (Ms.)	House of Representatives
REINDERS, Reinder (Mr.)	House of Representatives

(CDA : Christian Democratic Appeal / Appel chrétien-démocrate)

(PS : Socialist Party / Parti socialiste)

(VVD: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy / Parti populaire pour la liberté et la démocratie)

(OSF: Independent Senate Faction)

**NIGER**

KARIDIO, MAHAMADOU (M.) Chef de la délégation	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (PNDS)
ABDALLAH, Mahamadou (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (MPR Jamhouria)
DOGARI MOUMOUNI, Oumarou (Mr.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (FA-Lumana))
HABIBOU, Aminatou (Mme.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (PNDS)
MADOUGOU, Ousseyra (M.)	Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (Fallala)



MAHAMADOU, Abdallah (M.)  
OUSMANE, Moussa (M.)  
TOUDJANI IDRISSE, Abdoulaye (M.)

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (MPR Jamhouria)  
Membre de l'Assemblée nationale  
Conseiller

(PNDS : Niger Party for Democracy and Socialism / Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme)

(FA-Lumana : MODEN/FA-Lumana – Mouvement démocratique nigérien pour une fédération africaine)

(MPR Jamhouria : Patriotic Movement for the Republic / Mouvement patriotique pour la République)

(Fallala : Parti Fallala pour la République)

## NIGERIA

ABDULLAHI, Kabir Barkiya (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation

Member of the Senate (APC)

GALADIMA, Zakariyau M. (Mr.)  
FULATA, Abubakar Hassan (Mr.)

Member of the House of Representatives (APC)  
Member of the House of Representatives (APC)  
Chairman of the Rules and Businesses Committee

WAZIRI ABBA IBRAHIM, Khadijat (Ms.)  
TUKURA, Kabir Ibrahim (Mr.)  
ESEKE, Augustine (Mr.)

Member of the House of Representatives (APC)  
Member of the House of Representatives (APC)  
Secretary, Senate

(APC: All Progressive Congress / Congrès progressiste)

## NORTH MACEDONIA – MACEDOINE DU NORD

XHAFERI, Talat (Mr.)  
President of the Group, Leader of the delegation  
VELKOVSKI, Dime (Mr.)  
MICEVSKI, Nikola (Mr.)

Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic (DUI)

PANOVA, Eli (Ms.)

Member of the Assembly of the Republic (SDSM)  
Member of the Assembly of the Republic (VRMO-DPME)

ADEMI, Arber (Mr.)  
REXHEPI, Skender (Mr.)  
OGNENOVSKA, Biljana (Ms.)  
Co-Secretary to the Delegation  
SELMANI, Ilir (Mr.)  
BAJRAMI, Vjollca (Ms.)

Member of the Assembly of the Republic (VRMO-DPME)

Member of the Assembly of the Republic (DUI)  
Member of the Assembly of the Republic (A)  
Head of Division, Assembly of the Republic

PANKOVSKA, Bojana (Ms.)

Head of the Cabinet of the President of the Assembly  
Deputy Head of the Cabinet of the President, Assembly of the Republic

Protocol Officer of the President of the Assembly

(DUI : Democratic Union for Integration / Union démocratique pour l'intégration)

(SDSM: Social Democratic Union of Macedonia / Union social-démocrate de Macédoine)

(VMRO-DPME : VMRO-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity / VMRO-Parti démocratique pour l'unité nationale de Macédoine)

(A: Alternative)

## NORWAY – NORVEGE

MØRLAND, Tellef Inge (Mr.)  
President of the Group, Leader of the delegation  
ALMELAND, Grunde (Mr.)  
ERIKSEN, Even (Mr.)  
FOSS, Ingunn (Ms.)  
HJEMDAL, Silje (Ms.)  
MYKJÅLAND, Gro Anita (Ms.)  
FRASER, Thomas (Mr.)  
Secretary to the delegation  
STOCK, Lisbeth (Ms.)

Member of Parliament

Member of Parliament (Lib)  
Member of Parliament (L)  
Member of Parliament (C)  
Member of Parliament (P)  
Member of Parliament (CP)  
Senior Adviser

Adviser

(L : Labour Party / Parti du travail)

(C : Conservative Party / Parti Conservateur)

(Lib : Liberal Party / Parti libéral)

(P : Progress Party / Parti du progrès)

(CP : Centre Party / Parti du centre)

**OMAN**

AL MAWAALI, Khalid Hilal (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Chairman of the Shura Council
AL AWADI, Maryam (Ms.)	Member of the Shura Council
AL FANAH, Jihad (Mr.)	Member of the Shura Council
AL HOSANI, Khalil (Mr.)	Member of the Shura Council
AL-MAKHMARI, Ali (Mr.)	Member of the Shura Council
AL-RUSHIDI, Faisal (Mr.)	Member of the Shura Council
AL HAMD, Nahlah (Ms.)	Member of the Shura Council
AL SAADI, Khalid (Mr.)	Secretary General, State Council
AL NADABI, Ahmed (Mr.)	Secretary General, Shura Council
AL OWSI, Aiman (Mr.) Secretary of the Group	
AL HABSI, Abdullah (Mr.)	Director
AL RAISI, Kifaya (Ms.) Ambassador	

**PAKISTAN**

KAISER, Asad (Mr.) President of the Group, Leader of the Delegation	Speaker of the National Assembly Président de l'Assemblée nationale (PTI)
AYUB, Muhammad (Mr.)	Member of the Senate
CHAUDHARY, Ejaz Ahmad (Mr.)	Member of the Senate
IQBAL, Rai Muhammad Murtaza (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly
KHAN, Haider Ali (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (PTI)
KHAR, Hina Rabbani (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly
MARRI, Shazia Jannat (Ms.) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism	Member of the National Assembly (PPPP)
NAEK, Farooq (Mr.) Bureau, Standing Committee on UN Affairs	Member of the Senate (PPPP)
PASHA, Aisha Ghaus (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly
REHMAN, Sherry (Ms.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	Member of the Senate
SHAD, Abdul Shakoor (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly
HUSSAIN, Tahir (Mr.) Secretary of the Group, Member of the ASGP	Secretary, National Assembly
CHAUDHRY, Waseem Iqbal (Mr.) Advisor to the delegation	Director General (International Relations)
ALI, Muhammad (Mr.)	Assistant Director, International Relations
HASHMI, Syed Shamoon (Mr.)	Additional Secretary (Special Initiatives)
HAIDER, Syed (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary
SHAHWANI, Yawer Kadir (Mr.)	Adviser
(PTI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf / Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf )	
(PPPP : Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians / Parlementaires du Parti du peuple pakistanais)	

**PALESTINE**

ALAHMAD, Azzam (Mr.) Leader of the delegation President of the Group Committee on Middle East Questions	Member of the Palestinian National Council Member Political Affairs Committee (F)
ALWAZIR, Intisar (Ms.)	
QASEM, Belal (Mr.)	Member of the Palestinian National Council
	Member Committee on Social Affairs (F)
HAMAYEL, Omar (Mr.)	Member of the Palestinian National Council
	Member Social Affairs Committee (PLF)
QASEM, Mohammad (Mr.)	Member of the Palestinian National Council
KHRISHI, Ibrahim (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Member Committee on Economic Affairs (F)
SULAIMAN, Bashar (Mr.) Secretary of the Group	Member of the Palestinian National Council Secretary General, Palestinian National Council
	Director General of Inter-Parliamentary Relations, Palestinian National Council

(F : Fatah)

(PLF : Palestine Libération Front / Front de libération de la Palestine)

**PANAMA**

GONZÁLEZ, Alina (Ms.)

Leader of the delegation

CANO, Corina (Ms.)

AGUILA, Nancy (Ms.)

Secretary to the delegation

SELLERS, Allen (Mr.)

Chargé d'affaires

Member of the National Assembly (PRD)

Member of the National Assembly (MOLIRENA)

Director, International Relations

(PRD : Democratic Revolutionary Party / Parti révolutionnaire démocratique)

(MOLIRENA : Nationalist Republican Liberal Movement / Mouvement libéral républicain et nationaliste)

**PARAGUAY**

LLANO, Blas (Mr.)

Leader of the delegation

KEMPER, Patrick (Mr.)

Forum of Young Parliamentarians

SALDIVAR ROMERO, Maria Soledad (Ms.)

Diplomatic corps

Member of the Senate

Member of the Senate

**PERU – PEROU**

ALVA PRIETO, María del Carmen (Ms.)

President of the Group, Leader of the delegation

BUSTAMANTE DONAYRE, Ernesto (Mr.)

BARBARÁN REYES, Rosangella Andrea (Ms.)

SOTO PALACIOS, Wilson (Mr.)

PÉREZ DEL SOLAR, Eduardo (Mr.)

Speaker of the Congress of the Republic (AP)

Member of the Congress of the Republic (FP)

Member of the Congress of the Republic (FP)

Member of the Congress of the Republic (AP)

Diplomatic Corps

(AP: Acción Popular)

(FP: Fuerza popular)

**PHILIPPINES**

CAYETANO, Pia (Ms.)

Leader of the delegation

MENDOZA, Mark Llandro (Mr.)

Member of the ASGP

DE GUZMAN JR., Antonio (Mr.)

Secretary of the Group

IÑIGO, Rose Virginie (Ms.)

REGINALDO, Maria Elizabeth Cheryl (Ms.)

Member of the Senate (NP)

Secretary General of the House of Representatives

Director General, Office of International Relations and Protocol, Senate

Director II, House of Representatives

Chief Political Affairs Officer, Office of Senator Pia Cayetano

Legislative Staff Officer

MENDOZA, Ronyll (Mr.)

Secretary to the delegation

LHULLIER, Philippe Jones (Mr.)

Ambassador

(NP: Nacionalista Party / Parti nationaliste)

**POLAND – POLOGNE**

BARTUŚ, Barbara (Ms.)

Leader of the delegation

MORAWSKA-STANECKA, Gabriela (Ms.)

GOŁOJUCH, Kazimierz (Mr.)

ZWIEFKA, Tadeusz (Mr.)

KACZMARSKA, Agnieszka (Ms.)

Member of the ASGP

NIEMCZEWSKI, Adam (Mr.)

KARWOWSKA-SOKOŁOWSKA, Agata (Ms.)

Member of the ASGP

GRUBA, Wojciech (Mr.)

Secretary of the Group

WÓJCIK, Agata (Ms.)

Member of the Sejm (PiS)

Vice-President of the Senate (S)

Member of the Sejm (PiS)

Member of the Sejm (CC)

Secretary General, Sejm

Secretary General of the Senate

Director of the Analysis and Documentation Office, Senate

Sejm

Expert, Chancellery of the Senate

SKORUPA-WULCZYŃSKA, Aneta (Ms.)  
WEGRZYŃSKA, Karina (Ms.)  
Diplomatic corps

Adviser

(PiS : Law and Justice / Droit et justice)  
(S: Spring)  
(CC: Civic Coalition / Coalition civique)

## PORTUGAL

MARTINS, Hortense (Ms.)  
Leader of the delegation  
Committee on Middle East Questions  
PEREIRA, Carlos (Mr.)  
URBANO DE SOUSA, Constança (Ms.)  
Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians  
CARNEIRO, Hugo (Mr.)  
LACÃO, Jorge (Mr.)

Member of the Assembly of the Republic (PS)  
Economy Committee

Member of the Assembly of the Republic (PS)  
Member of the Assembly of the Republic (PS)

Member of the Assembly of the Republic (PS)  
Deputy Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic (PS)  
Constitutional Affairs Committee  
Adviser of the International Relations and Cooperation  
Division Department, Assembly of the Republic

SANTOS, Suzana (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group

(SDP : Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate)  
(PS : Socialist Party / Parti socialiste)

## QATAR

AL-GHANIM, Hassan Abdulla (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
AL-MARRI, Ali Fetais (Mr.)  
AL-AHBABI, Mohammed Bin Mahdi (Mr.)  
Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and  
International Security  
AL-HITMI, Ahmad Hitmi (Mr.)  
AL-JUFAIRI, Shaikha Yousouf (Ms.)  
AL-MANNAI, Mohammed Omar (Mr.)  
AL-FADALA, Ahmad Nasser (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
BOUCHKOUJ, Nouredine (Mr.)  
AL-HASSAN, Mohammed (Mr.)  
AL-HAMAR, Abdullah (Mr.)  
Ambassador

Speaker of the Shura Council

Member of the Shura Council  
Member of the Shura Council

Member of the Shura Council  
Member of the Shura Council  
Member of the Shura Council  
Secretary General

Legal Expert, Shura Council  
International Affairs Researcher, Shura Council

## REPUBLIC OF KOREA – REPUBLIQUE DE COREE

PARK, Byeong-seug (Mr.)  
Leader of the Delegation  
CHO, Taeyong (Mr.)  
JUN, Hyesook (Ms.)  
KANG, Sunwoo (Ms.)  
KIM, Hoi Jae (Mr.)  
KIM, Honggul (Mr.)  
KWAK, Hyunjun (Ms.)  
PARK, Seohnyeon  
Secretary of the delegation  
KIM, Yun Choong (Mr.)  
KO, Yun Hee (Mr.)  
CHO, Koo Rae (Mr.)  
SAHNGHOON, Bahk (Mr.)  
Ambassador

Speaker of the National Assembly

Member of the National Assembly  
Member of the National Assembly  
Member of the National Assembly  
Member of the National Assembly  
Member of the National Assembly  
Director General  
Protocol Officer

Protocol Officer  
Adviser  
Adviser

## ROMANIA – ROUMANIE

STAN, Ioan (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
DINICĂ, Silvia-Monica (Ms.)  
Working Group on Science and Technology

Member of the Senate (SDP)

Member of the Senate (SRUPLUS)  
Chair, Committee for Economic Affairs, Industries  
and Services  
Committee for Information Technologies and  
Communications

FLOREA, Daniel (Mr.)  
FULGEANU-MOAGHER, Laura-Mihaela (Ms.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (SDP)  
Member of the Senate (SDP)

DINU, Cristina-Elena (Ms.)

Member of the Chamber of Deputies (SDP)  
Committee for Human Rights, Cults and National  
Minorities Issues  
Committee for Health and Family  
Director, External Multilateral Relations Directorate,  
Senate  
Parliamentary Adviser, General Directorate for Foreign  
Affairs, Chamber of Deputies  
Director of Cabinet of the Secretary General  
Parliamentary Adviser, Secretariat of the Romanian IPU  
Group, Senate

DUMITRESCU, Cristina (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group  
POTERAŞU, Teodora (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group  
IONESCU, Cristina (Ms.)  
TEODOREL, Luminiţa (Ms.)  
Secretary of the delegation  
VLAD, Florin  
Diplomatic corps

(SDP : Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate)  
(SRUPLUS : Save Romania Union PLUS / Union Sauvez la Roumanie)  
(NLP: National Liberal Party / Parti libéral national)

### RUSSIAN FEDERATION – FEDERATION DE RUSSIE

KOSACHEV, Konstantin (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
High-Level Advisory Group on Countering  
Terrorism and Violent Extremism  
KARELOVA, Galina (Ms.)  
TOLSTOY, Petr (Mr.)  
Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and  
International Security  
GAVRILOV, Sergei (Mr.)  
Bureau, Standing Committee on UN Affairs

Deputy Speaker of the Council of the Federation

Deputy Speaker of the Council of the Federation  
Deputy Speaker of the State Duma (UR)

GUMEROVA, Liliia (Ms.)  
Working Group on Science and Technology  
Bureau of Women Parliamentarians  
VTORYGINA, Elena (Ms.)  
Bureau of Women Parliamentarian  
Committee to Promote Respect for International  
Humanitarian Law  
AFANASIEVA, Elena (Ms.)  
Bureau of Women Parliamentarians  
SLUTSKIY, Leonid (Mr.)

Member of the State Duma (CP)  
Chairman of the Committee on Development of Civil  
Society  
Member of the Council of the Federation

Member of the State Duma (UR)  
Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Family,  
Women and Children Affairs

Member of the Council of the Federation

Member of the State Duma (LDP)  
Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs  
Member of the Council of the Federation  
Adviser, International Relations Department, Council  
of the Federation  
Head of the Secretariat of the Deputy Speaker  
Deputy Head of the Secretariat of the Deputy Speaker  
Senior Counsellor International Relations Department,  
Council of the Federation

KLIMOV, Andrei (Mr.)  
SHMACHKOVA, Olga (Ms.)  
Secretary to the delegation  
SHCHERBATKINA, Mariia (Ms.)  
KHODYREV, Oleg (Mr.)  
ZHOLOBOVA, Maria (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group  
KORCHAGIN, Yuri (Mr.)  
Ambassador

(UR : United Russia / Russie unifiée)  
(CP: Communist Party / Parti communiste)  
(LDP: Liberal Democratic Party / Parti libéral-démocrate)

### RWANDA

NYIRASAFARI, Esperance (Ms.)  
Leader of the delegation  
DUSHIMIMANA, Lambert (Mr.)  
MUZANA, Alice (Ms.)  
Working Group on Science and Technology  
TURIKUMANA, Emmanuel (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP

Vice-President of the Senate (RPF)

Member of the Senate (RPF)  
Member of the Chamber of Deputies (PSD)

Deputy Secretary General

(RPF : Rwanda Patriotic Front / Front patriotique rwandais)  
(PSD: Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate)

**SAN MARINO – SAINT-MARIN**

ANDRUCCIOLI, Carlotta (Ms.)  
BUGLI, Lorenzo (Mr.)  
ROSSI, Matteo (Mr.)

Member of the Great and General Council (DML)  
Member of the Great and General Council (PDCS)  
Member of the Great and General Council (NPR)

(DML: Domani – Motus Liberi)

(PDCS: Christian Democratic Party of San Marino / Parti chrétien-démocrate saint-marinais)

(MIS: Independent Group)

(NPR: Noi per la Repubblica)

**SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE – SAO TOME-ET-PRINCIPE**

DAS NEVES, Delfin (Mr.)  
D'ALVA, Filomena (Ms.)  
COTÚ, Danilson (Mr.)  
BARROS, António (Mr.)  
De CARVALHO, Paulo Jorge (Mr.)  
FERREIRA, Samora (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
MOTA, Darine (Ms.)

Speaker of the National Assembly  
Member of the National Assembly (MLSTP-PSD)  
Member of the National Assembly (PDC/MDFM/UDD)  
Member of the National Assembly (MLSTP-PSD)  
Member of the National Assembly (ADI)  
Secretary General, National Assembly  
  
Adviser

(MLSTP-PSD: Sao Tome and Principe Liberation Movement / Mouvement de libération de Sao Tomé-et-Principe)

(PDC/MDFM/UDD: Democratic Convergence Party / Force for Democratic Change Movement – Union of Democrats for Citizenship and Development / Parti de la convergence démocratique / Mouvement pour les forces de changement démocratique – Union des démocrates pour la citoyenneté et le développement)

(ADI: Acção Democrática Independente)

**SAUDI ARABIA – ARABIE SAOUDITE**

ALSHEIKH, Abdullah (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
ALSULAMI, Meshal (Mr.)  
ALHELAISSI, Hoda (Ms.)  
Advisory Group on Health  
ALBAWARDI, Khalid (Mr.)  
BINZAGR, Ghazi (Mr.)  
ALSENAN, Maha (Ms.)  
ALMETAIRI, Mohammed (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
ALQAHTANI, Faris (Mr.)  
ALMANSOUR, Khalid (Mr.)  
Adviser  
ALTURKI, Khalid (Mr.)  
ALGAIN, Azzam A.A.(Mr.)  
Ambassador

Speaker of the Consultative Council  
  
Deputy Speaker of the Consultative Council  
Member of the Consultative Council  
  
Member of the Consultative Council  
Member of the Consultative Council  
Member of the Consultative Council  
Secretary General, Consultative Council  
  
Researcher  
Consultative Council  
  
Director of Ceremonies to the President

**SENEGAL**

CISSE, Date Niass (M.)  
Chef de la délégation  
MERGANE KANOUTÉ, Adjii Diarra (Mme.)  
Vice-Présidente du Comité exécutif  
Sous-Comité des finances  
KANE, Mor (M.)  
SOW, Yoro (M.)  
SALL, Fanta (Mme.)

Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (APR)  
  
Vice-Présidente de l'Assemblée nationale (BBY)  
  
Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (PDS)  
Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (APR)  
Membre de l'Assemblée nationale (APR)

(APR: Alliance for the Republic / Alliance pour la République)

(BBY: Benno Bokk Yaakaar)

(PDS: Senegal Democratic Party / Parti démocratique sénégalais)

**SERBIA – SERBIE**

DACIC, Ivica (Mr.)  
President of the Group, Leader of the delegation  
GRUJIC, Mladen (Mr.)  
Member of the Executive Committee

MIJATOVIC, Milorad (Mr.)  
Group of Facilitators for Cyprus

MIJATOVIC, Jelena (Ms.)

POPOVIC, Ivana (Ms.)  
OGNJANOVIC, Olivera (Ms.)  
DJURASINOVIC RADOJEVIC, Dragana (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group  
ILIC, Ana (Ms.)  
JAKSIC, Olivera (Ms.)  
LALIC, Katarina (Ms.)  
Ambassador

Speaker of the National Assembly (SPS)  
Member of the National Assembly (SNS)  
European Integration Committee  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
Member of the National Assembly (SDPS)  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
Security Services Control Committee  
Committee on Finance, State Budget and Control of  
Public Spending  
Member of the National Assembly (SNS)  
Committee on the Economy, Regional Development,  
Trade, Tourism and Energy  
Committee on Kosovo-Metohija  
Committee on the Rights of the Child  
Member of the National Assembly (SNS)  
Member of the National Assembly (SNS)

Adviser to the Speaker of the National Assembly  
Adviser

(SPS: Socialist Party of Serbia / Parti socialiste serbe)  
(SNS: Serbian Progressive Party "For our children" / Parti progressiste serbe "Pour nos enfants")  
(SDPS: Social Democratic Party of Serbia / Parti social-démocrate serbe)  
(PUPS: Party of United Pensioners of Serbia / Parti des retraités unis de Serbie )

**SEYCHELLES**

WILLIAM, Waven (Mr.)  
Bureau, Standing Committee on Sustainable  
Development

Member of the National Assembly (LDS)

(LDS : Seychelles Democratic Alliance / Union démocratique seychelloise )

**SIERRA LEONE**

BUNDU, Abass Chernor (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
GEORGE, Edward (Mr.)  
LANSANA-MINAH, Matilda Yayu (Ms.)  
NYUMA, Mathew Sahr (Mr.)

TONGI, Emilia Lolloh (Ms.)

Speaker of Parliament (SLPP)  
Member of Parliament (SLPP)  
President of the Young Legislators Network  
Member of Parliament  
Member of Parliament, Leader of Government Business  
(SLPP)  
Member of Parliament (I)  
Committee on Transparency  
Committee on IPU  
Committee on Public Accounts  
Committee on Labor  
Member of Parliament (APC)  
Clerk of Parliament

Clerk of the IPU Committee

Adviser  
Public Relations Officer

SESAY, Hassan Abdoul (Mr.)  
TARAWALLY, Paran Umar (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
KOROMA, Mary (Ms.)  
Secretary of the delegation  
VANDY, Hawa (Ms.)  
SAMBA, Agustine (Mr.)  
MUSTAPHA, Khallow Suraya (Ms.)  
Diplomatic corps

(SLPP : Sierra Leone Peoples Party / Parti populaire de la Sierra Leone )  
(I : Independent / Indépendant)  
(APC : All People's Congress / Congrès du peuple réuni)

**SLOVENIA – SLOVENIE**

RAJIĆ, Branislav (Mr.) Leader of the delegation	Member of the National Assembly (Unaffiliated)
LINDIČ, Lea (Ms.)	Adviser

**SOUTH AFRICA – AFRIQUE DU SUD**

MAPISA-NQAKULA, Nosiviwe (Ms.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the National Assembly (ANC)
LUCAS, Sylvia (Ms.)	Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (ANC)
NTOMBELA, Madala Louis (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (ANC)
LOTRIET, Annelie (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (DA)
SHIVAMBU, Nyiko Floyd (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (EFF)
NEMADZINGA-TSHABALALA, Judith (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (ANC)
TYAWA, Penelope Nolizo (Ms.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary General
NOJOZI, Nogolide (Ms.)	Advise
SITHOLE, Dumisani Job (Mr.)	Adviser
JENKINS, Frank (Mr.)	Adviser
MVULANE, Sebolelo (Ms.)	Adviser
KULA, Zuki (Ms.)	Adviser
TEMBE, Sithembiso (Mr.)	Adviser

(ANC: African National Congress / Congrès national africain)

(DA : Democratic Alliance / Gauche démocratique)

(EFF : Economic Freedom Fighters / Combattants de la liberté économique)

**SOUTH SUDAN – SOUDAN DU SUD**

NUNU KUMBA, Jemma (Ms.)	Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (SPLM)
BARRI WANJ, Eche Likai (Mr.)	Member of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (SPLM)
ACIEN, Gabriel (Mr.)	Member of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (SPLM)
WANI, Mary (Ms.)	Member of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly
YOH, John (Mr.)	Member of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (SPLM)
NGONG, Makuc (Mr.)	Clerk of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly
ROMAI, Anita (Ms.)	Speaker's Protocol Officer
TUU, Janet (Ms.)	Secretary
Member of the ASGP	

(SPLM : Sudan People's Liberation Movement / Mouvement populaire de libération du Soudan)

**SPAIN – Espagne**

ECHANIZ, José Ignacio (Mr.) Leader of the delegation President of the Group Vice-President of the Advisory Group on Health Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and International Security	Member of the Congress of Deputies (PP)
CEPEDA, José (Mr.) Vice-President of the Spanish IPU Group	Member of the Senate (PSOE)
GARCÍA DÍEZ, Joaquín (Mr.)	Member of the Congress of Deputies (PP)
MARTÍNEZ ZARAGOZA, Ana (Ms.)	Member of the Congress of Deputies (PSOE)
SÁNCHEZ del REAL, Victor (Mr.)	Member of the Congress of Deputies (Vox)
ROSIQUE, Marta (Ms.)	Member of the Congress of Deputies (ERC)
GUTIÉRREZ VICEN, Carlos (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary General of the Congress of Deputies
CAVERO GÓMEZ, Manuel (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Secretary General of the Senate
BOYRA, Helena (Ms.) Secretary of the Group	Adviser, Congress of Deputies
DE PINIÉS, Francisco Javier (Mr.) Secretary to the delegation	Adviser



GOMEZ-BERNARDO, María Teresa (Ms.)  
GARCÍA DE ENTERRÍA, Andrea (Ms.)

Secretary  
Adviser, Congress of Deputies

(PP: People's Party / Parti populaire)  
(UP: Unidas Podemos)  
(PSOE: Spanish Socialist Workers' Party / Parti socialiste ouvrier espagnol)  
(Vox)  
(ERC: Republican Left of Catalonia / Gauche républicaine de Catalogne)

## SURINAME

GAJADIEN, Asiskumar (Mr.) Leader of the Delegation Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law	Member of the National Assembly (VHP)
BOUVA, Melvin (Mr.) Working Group on Science and Technology	Member of the National Assembly (NDP)
ETNEL, Patricia (Ms.) DE WINDT, Ruth (Ms.) Member of the ASGP	Member of the National Assembly (NPS) Secretary General
JAIRAM, Asna (Ms.)	Advisor International Relations DNA

(VHP : Progressive Reform Party / Parti progressiste et réformiste)  
(NDP : National Democratic Party / Parti national démocratique)  
(NPS: Nationale Partij Suriname)

## SWEDEN – SUEDE

WIDEGREN, Cecilia (Ms.) Leader of the delegation Member of the Executive Committee Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance	Member of Parliament (M) Committee on Foreign Affairs
LARSSON, Dag (Mr.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights	Member of Parliament (SDP)
LINDH, Eva (Ms.) LÖBERG, Petter (Mr.) SONDÉN, Björn (Mr.) Acting Secretary to the delegation	Member of Parliament (SDP) Member of Parliament (SDP) International Adviser
HERMANSSON, Ralph (Mr.) Deputy Acting Secretary to the delegation	International Adviser

(M: Moderate Party / Parti modéré)  
(SDP: Social Democratic Party / Parti social-démocrate)

## SWITZERLAND – SUISSE

LOHR, Christian (M.) Chef de la délégation Président du Groupe	Membre du Conseil national (M/C) Commission de la sécurité sociale et de la santé publique
JOSITSCH, Daniel (M.) Vice-Président du Groupe	Membre du Conseil des Etats (SP/PS) Vice-Président de la Commission des affaires juridiques Commission de politique extérieure, Commission de la politique de sécurité Commission des institutions politiques
FEHLMANN RIELLE, Laurence (Mme.) Membre du Comité exécutif Bureau des Femmes parlementaires	Membre du Conseil national (SP/PS) Présidente de la Commission des affaires juridiques, Commission de l'immunité
WEHRLI, Laurent (M.) Commission permanente des Affaires des Nations Unies Comité sur les questions relatives au Moyen-Orient	Membre du Conseil national (FDP/PLR) Commission de politique extérieure Président de la Délégation auprès de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
SCHWAB, Philippe (M.) Président de l'ASGP	Secrétaire général de l'Assemblée fédérale
EQUEY, Jérémie (M.) Secrétaire du Groupe et de la délégation	Relations internationales

GNÄGI, Anna Lea (Mme.)  
Secrétaire adjointe du Groupe,  
Secrétariat de la délégation  
MOCK, Hanspeter (M.)  
Ambassadeur

Relations internationales

(M/C : Die Mitte / The Centre / Le Centre)  
(SP/PS : Socialist Party / Parti socialiste)  
(FDP/PLR : The Liberals / Les Libéraux-Radicaux)

### SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC – REPUBLIQUE ARABE SYRIENNE

ALAJLANI, Mhd. Akram (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
ALSALEH, Maysaa (Ms.)  
ABRACH, Mhd. Sulaiman (Mr.)  
AL ALOU, Nedal (Mr.)  
ARISSIAN, Nora (Ms.)  
KABTOULEH, Mohamad (Mr.)  
MEREI, Ahmad (Mr.)  
DIAB, Abdul Azim (Mr.)  
Secretary of the Group  
ALKASSIR, Samir (Mr.)  
Ambassador

Deputy Speaker of the People's Assembly

Member of the People's Assembly (BAP)  
Member of the People's Assembly (NCP)  
Member of the People's Assembly  
Member of the People's Assembly  
Member of the People's Assembly  
Member of the People's Assembly (BAP)  
Director of P.R., People's Assembly

(BAP: Baath Arab Party / Parti Baath arabe)  
(NCP : Parti du Pacte national)

### TUNISIA – TUNISIE

MADHIOUB Maher (M.)  
Chef de la délégation  
KHLIFI, Oussama (M.)  
AYADI, Fathi (M.)  
HACHMI, Zied (M.)

Membre de l'Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple

Membre de l'Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple  
Membre de l'Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple  
Membre de l'Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple

### TURKEY – TURQUIE

SENTOP, Mustafa (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
KAVAKCI KAN, Ravza (Ms.)  
President of the Group  
Committee on Middle East Questions  
EMIR, Murat (Mr.)  
OZSOY, Hisyar (Mr.)  
KARAKAYA, Mevlut (Mr.)  
ANDICAN, A. Ahat (Mr.)  
YILDIZ, Zeynep (Ms.)  
ARSLAN, Ednan (Mr.)  
KUMBUZOGLU, Mehmet Ali (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
KOCALP, Konur Alp (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
HAKI, Enes Malik (Mr.)  
GUNER, Mumtaz (Mr.)  
Secretary to the delegation  
BULBUL, Kudret (Mr.)  
OZDEMIR, Huseyin (Mr.)  
AKCAPAR, Burak (Mr.)  
Ambassador

Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (AK)

Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (CHP)  
Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (HDP)  
Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (MHP)  
Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (İYİ)  
Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (AK)  
Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (CHP)  
Secretary General, Grand National Assembly of Turkey

Deputy Director, Grand National Assembly of Turkey

Adviser to the Speaker

Director  
Advisor to the Speaker

(AK : Justice and Development Party / Parti de la justice et du développement)  
(CHP : Republican People's Party / Parti populaire républicain)  
(HDP : People's Democratic Party / Parti démocratique populaire)  
(MHP : Nationalist Movement Party / Parti d'action nationaliste)  
(İYİ : İyi Parti)

**UGANDA – OUGANDA**

AMONG, Anita Annet (Ms.) Leader of the delegation President of the Group	Deputy Speaker of Parliament (NRM)
ANYAKUN, Esther (Ms.) Member of the Executive Committee	Member of Parliament
ACORA ODONGA, Nancy (Ms.) KATO, Mohamed (Mr.)	Member of Parliament
MUTUMBA, Abdul (Mr.) NSANJA, Patrick (Mr.)	Member of Parliament (NRM)
KAGANZI, Martha (Ms.) Secretary of the Group	Member of Parliament (NRM)
ARIKO, Herbert (Mr.) BAMUWAMYE, James (Mr.)	Member of Parliament
WABWIRE, Paul (Mr.) Member of the ASGP	Principal Clerk Assistant, Parliament
NUWABINE, Meshach (Mr.)	Executive Secretary to the Deputy Speaker Adviser to the Deputy Speaker Deputy Clerk
	Senior Research Staff

(NRM : National Resistance Movement / Mouvement de la résistance nationale )

(NUP : National Unity Platform / Plateforme de l'unité nationale)

**UKRAINE**

RUDENKO, Olga (Ms.) Leader of the delegation Forum of Young Parliamentarians	Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (SN) Committee on Foreign Policy and Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation
VASYLENKO, Lesia (Ms.) President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (Holos) Budget Committee
SHKRUM, Alona (Ms.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and International Security	Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (BP) Chairwoman of the Committee on State Building, Regional Policy and Local Self-Government
ZABRODSKYI, Mykhailo (Mr.) ZHUPANYN, Andrii (Mr.)	Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (ES)
ZHMERYNETSKY, Oleksiy (Mr.) SHTUCHNYI, Viacheslav (Mr.)	Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (SN)
Member of the ASGP KOZACHENKO, Yevgenii (Mr.)	Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (SN) Secretary General
MYKHALIUK, Oksana (Ms.)	Chief consultant of the Interparliamentary Department, Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Chief consultant of the Inter-Parliamentary Department, Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

(SN : Servant of the People / Le Serviteur du peuple)

(Holos : Voice / Voix)

(BP : Batkivschyna Party / Parti Batkivshyna)

(ES : European Solidarity / Solidarité européenne)

**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – EMIRATS ARABES UNIS**

ALNUAMI, Ali (Mr.) IPU Vice-President Member of the Executive Committee	Member of the Federal National Council
Sub-Committee on Finance Leader of the delegation	
AL SUWAIDI, Meera (Ms.) Bureau of Women Parliamentarians	Member of the Federal National Council
FALAKNAZ, Sara (Ms.) Bureau, Standing Committee on Peace and International Security	Member of the Federal National Council
ALMHERI, Marwan (Mr.) ALAQILI, Ahmed (Mr.)	Member of the Federal National Council
	Chief Specialist International Relations, Federal National Council
ALMUHAIRI, Juma (Mr.) ALYAFEI, Mubarak (Mr.)	Head of Protocol
ALMUHAIRI, Ahmed (Mr.)	Protocol

**UNITED KINGDOM – ROYAUME-UNI**

BALDWIN, Harriett (Ms.)	Member of the House of Commons (C)
Leader of the delegation	
BRADLEY, Karen (Ms.)	Member of the House of Commons (C)
DAVID, Wayne (Mr.)	Member of the House of Commons (L)
HOOPER, Gloria (Baroness)	Member of the House of Lords (C)
OWATEMI, Taiwo (Ms.)	Member of the House of Commons (L)
SHEEHAN, Shas (Baroness)	Member of the House of Lords
NIMMO, Rick (Mr.)	Director of BGIPU
LIBEROTTI-HARRISON, Gabriella (Ms.)	Head of Multilateral Programme of BGIPU
EDWARDS, Rhianon (Ms.)	International Project Manager of BGIPU
LAURENCE SMYTH, Liam (Mr.)	
Representative to the ASGP from the House of Commons	
BURTON, Simon (Mr.)	
Representative to the ASGP of the House of Lords	
MOELLER, Daniel (Mr.)	
Assistant to the ASGP Secretariat	
GARVIE-ADAMS, Elektra (Ms.)	
Secretary of the ASGP	
BIRKETT, James (Mr.)	
Diplomatic corps	

(C : Conservative / Parti conservateur)

(L : Labour / Parti travailliste)

(Lib Dems : Liberal Democrats / Démocrates libéraux)

**UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA – REPUBLIQUE-UNIE DE TANZANIE**

NDUGAI, Job Yustino (Mr.)	Speaker of the National Assembly (CCM)
Leader of the Delegation	
MATIKO, Esther Nicholas (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (CHADEMA)
MHAGAMA, Joseph Kizito (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (CCM)
KINGU, Elibariki Immanuel (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (CCM)
ULENGE, Mwanaisha Ng'azi (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (CCM)
RAMADHAN, Ramadhan Suleiman (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (CCM)
MWIHAMBI, Nenelewa Joyce (Ms.)	Clerk of the National Assembly
Member of the ASGP	
CHAMWELA, Joshua Willson (Mr.)	Secretary to the Speaker
Member of the ASGP	
KIHANGE, Zainab Issa (Ms.)	
Secretary to the delegation	
MZEE, Mohamedi Mzee (Mr.)	Official to the Speaker
LUPEMBA, Ligwa Masele (Mr.)	Official to the Speaker
CHOHOLO, Lukindo Zuberi (Mr.)	Official to the Speaker
MAKUNGU, Ruth Stanley (Ms.)	Secretary to the Clerk

(CCM: CHAMA CHA MAPINDUZI)

(CHADEMA: CHAMA CHA DEMOKRASIA NA MAENDELEO)

**URUGUAY**

ARGIMÓN, Beatriz (Ms.)	Speaker of the General Assembly and the Senate (PN)
IPU Vice-President	Vice-President of the Republic
Member of the Executive Committee	
Leader of the delegation	
President of the Group	
COUTINHO RODRIGUEZ, Germán (Mr.)	Member of the Senate (PC)
GANDINI, Jorge (Mr.)	Member of the Senate (PN)
High-level Advisory Group on	
Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism	
BONOMI, Eduardo (Mr.)	Member of the Senate (FA)
NANE, Silvia (Ms.)	Member of the Senate (FA)
Committee on Democracy and Human Rights	
ASIAÍN, Carmen (Ms.)	Member of the Senate (PN)
Member of the Committee on the	
Human Rights of Parliamentarians	

SÁNCHEZ, Gustavo (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
RIPOLL, Fernando (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
MONTERO, José Pedro (Mr.)  
Member of the ASGP  
GALVALISI, Carina (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group and of GRULAC  
PIQUINELA, Oscar (Mr.)  
Secretary of GRULAC  
AYALA, Ana Teresa (Ms.)  
Ambassador

Secretary General, Senate  
  
Secretary General of the House of Representatives  
  
Secretary General, Senate  
  
Head of International Relations, General Assembly

(PN : National Party / Parti national)  
(FA : Frente Amplio / Front élargi)  
(PC: Partido Colorado)

### UZBEKISTAN – OUZBEKISTAN

NARBAEVA, Tanzila Kamalovna (Ms.)  
Leader of the delegation  
SAIDOV, Akmal (Mr.)  
IPU Vice-President  
Member of the Executive Committee  
Sub-Committee on Finance  
ATANIYAZOVA, Aral (Ms.)  
Advisory Group on Health  
TILAVOLDIEV, Nodir (Mr.)  
Bureau, Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights  
LITVINOVA, Olga (Ms.)  
LAPASOV, Ulugbek (Mr.)  
Ambassador

Chairwoman of the Senate  
  
First Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber  
  
  
  
Member of the Senate  
Committee on the Development of the Aral Sea Region  
Member of the Legislative Chamber  
  
Member of the Legislative Chamber

### VIET NAM

VU HAI, Ha (Mr.)  
President of the Group, Leader of the delegation  
DON, Tuan Phong (Mr.)  
PHAM, Thuy Chinh (Ms.)  
LE, Thu Ha (Ms.)  
BUI, Hoai Son (Mr.)  
TRAN, Kim Chi (Ms.)  
Secretary of the Group  
VU, Dai Phuong (Mr.)  
NGUYEN, Thi Quynh (Ms.)

Member of the National Assembly (CPV)  
Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee  
Member of the National Assembly (CPV)  
Member of the National Assembly (CPV)  
Member of the National Assembly (CPV)  
Member of the National Assembly (CPV)  
Head of the Multilateral Division, National Assembly  
  
Adviser  
Adviser

(CPV: Communist Party of Vietnam / Parti communiste vietnamien)

### YEMEN

AL-SHADADI, Mohamed Ali (Mr.)  
Leader of the delegation  
AL-AHMAR, Hamid Abdullah (Mr.)  
AL-GASSUSS, Abdulmalek Abdullah (Mr.)  
AL-SAAR, Ali Mohammed (Mr.)  
ALASALI, Mohammed Thabet (Mr.)  
BIN-MADI, Mabkhout (Mr.)  
  
DARWESH, Abdullah Salah (Mr.)  
Secretary to the delegation

Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives  
  
Member of the House of Representatives  
Member of the House of Representatives  
Member of the House of Representatives  
Member of the House of Representatives  
Acting Secretary General of the  
House of Representatives

**ZAMBIA – ZAMBIE**

MUTTI, Nelly B K (Ms.) Leader of the delegation	Speaker of the National Assembly
KATUTA, Given (Ms.) Chair of the Advisory Group on Health	Member of the National Assembly Transport, Works and Supply Committee Cabinet Affairs Committee (I)
KAMBONI, Harry (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (UPND)
NG'ANDWE, Jean C (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (PF)
SABAO, Jacqueline (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (UPND)
ZULU, Menyani (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (I)
MBEWE, Cecilian Nsenduluka (Ms.) Secretary of the Group, Member of the ASGP	Clerk of the National Assembly, National Assembly
BWALYA, Barnabas (Mr.)	Adviser, National Assembly
KAWIMBE, Stephen (Mr.)	Adviser, National Assembly
SAMUWIKI, Sage (Mr.)	Adviser, National Assembly
MONGA, Pauline (Ms.)	Adviser, National Assembly

(FDD: Forum for Democracy and Development / Forum pour la démocratie et le développement )

(UPND: United Party for National Development / Parti uni pour le développement national)

(PF: Patriotic Front / Front patriotique)

(I : Independent)

**ZIMBABWE**

MUDENDA, Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo (Mr.) Member of the Executive Committee Leader of the delegation	Speaker of Parliament (ZANU/PF)
CHINOMONA, Mabel Memory (Ms.)	President of the Senate
MNANGAGWA, Tongai Mafidi (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (ZANU/PF)
MAKONI, Roselyn Roseweater (Ms.)	Member of the National Assembly (ZANU/PF)
MUZENDA, Tsitsi Veronica (Ms.)	Member of the Senate (ZANU/PF)
TSVANGIRAI, Vincent (Mr.)	Member of the National Assembly (MDC-T)
GUVI, Kudakwashe Califinos (Mr.)	Director, Senate President's Office
MUSHANDINGA, Martha (Ms.)	Principal Executive Assistant to the Speaker of the National Assembly
CHISANGO, Rumbidzai Pamela (Ms.) Secretary to the delegation	Principal External Relations Officer
JENJE, Asha (Mr.)	Director in the Clerk's Office
SHONIWA, Abigail (Ms.) Ambassador	

(ZANU/PF: Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front / Union nationale africaine - Front patriotique du Zimbabwe)

(MDC-T: Movement for Democratic Change (T) / Mouvement pour un changement démocratique)

**II. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS - MEMBRES ASSOCIES****ARAB PARLIAMENT  
PARLEMENT ARABE**

ALASOOMI, Adel Bin Abdul Rahman (Mr.)	Speaker
President of the Group, Leader of the delegation	
EL MOGHAZY, Yousry (Mr.)	Member of Parliament
BARAKAT, Ihssan (Ms.)	Member of Parliament
AL AIFAN, Abdullah (Mr.)	Member of Parliament
ALSHUROOQI, Nabil (Mr.)	Deputy Secretary General
ABD EL AZIZ, Ashraf (Mr.)	Adviser

**EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (EALA)  
ASSEMBLEE LEGISLATIVE EST-AFRICAINE**

NGOGA, Karoli Martin (Mr.)	Speaker
Leader of the delegation	Chairperson of the EALA Commission
NOORU, Adan Mohamed (Mr.)	Member of Parliament
RUTAZANA, Francine (Ms.)	Member of Parliament
KAKOOZA James (Mr.)	Member of Parliament
AMODING, Priscilla (Ms.)	Senior Administrative Assistant to the Speaker

**LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN PARLIAMENT (PARLATINO)  
PARLEMENT DE L'AMÉRIQUE LATINE ET DES CARAÏBES**

PIZARRO SOTO, Jorge (Mr.)	Speaker
CASTILLO G., Elias A. (Mr.)	Commission of Public Infrastructure and Channel Affairs
Executive Secretary	
PINTO, Noreixa (Ms.)	Adviser

**WEST AFRICAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION (WAEMU)  
UNION ÉCONOMIQUE ET MONÉTAIRE OUEST-AFRICAINE (UEMOA)**

COSTA PEREIRA, Maria Paula (Mme.)	Vice-Présidente
-----------------------------------	-----------------

**III. OBSERVERS - OBSERVATEURS****PARTNERSHIP FOR MATERNAL, NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTH**

FOGSTAD, HELGA (Ms.), Executive Director  
MUSTAFA, Tahira (Ms.), Technical Officer

**AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY UNION (APU)****UNION PARLEMENTAIRE AFRICAINE**

IDI GADO, Boubacar (Mr.), Secretary General  
CHEROUATI, Samir (Mr.), Director

**ARAB INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (AIPU)****UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE ARABE**

AL-SHAWABKEH, Fayez (Mr.), Secretary General  
NIHAWI, Samir (Mr.)

**ASIAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (APA)****ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE ASIATIQUE**

MAJIDI, Mohammad Reza (Mr.), Secretary General  
HASHEMI, Seyed Javad (Mr.), Director of International Affairs

**COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPA)**

SALIK, Matthew (Mr.), Head of Parliamentary Development  
DAVIES, Tom (Mr.)

**FORUM OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION (FP- ICGLR)****FORUM DES PARLEMENTS DE LA CONFÉRENCE INTERNATIONALE SUR LA RÉGION DES GRANDS LACS (FP-CIRGL)**

KAKOBA, Onyango (Mr.), Secretary General  
BOTH, Jeni (Mr.), Programme Manager

**G5 SAHEL INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE****COMITÉ INERPARLEMENTAIRE DU G5 SAHEL**

TRAORE, Karamoko Jean Marie (M.), Secrétaire exécutif  
ABDOU, Issaka (M.)

**GLOBAL ORGANIZATION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AGAINST CORRUPTION (GOPAC)****ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES PARLEMENTAIRES CONTRE LA CORRUPTION (GOPAC)**

RETNOASTUTI TJAHJANI DWIRINI, Endah (Ms.), External Relations and Regional Engagement Manager  
LISTYA, Anindita Kusuma (Ms.), Programme Manager

**PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT (PNND)****PARLEMENTAIRES POUR LA NON PROLIFERATION NUCLEAIRE ET LE DESARMEMENT (PNDN)**

WARE, Alyn (Mr.) Global Coordinator

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN (PAM)****ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE**

MIGLIORE, Gennaro (Mr.), PAM President  
ROQUE, Pedro (Mr.), President Emeritus and Vice President  
PIAZZI, Sergio (Mr.) Secretary General

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION OF BELARUS AND RUSSIA****ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'UNION DU BELARUS ET DE LA FEDERATION DE RUSSIE**

RACHKOV, Sergei (Mr.), Member of the Council of the Republic of Belarus  
MAZURKEVICH, Maksim (Mr.)

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF TURKIC SPEAKING COUNTRIES (TURKPA)****ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DES PAYS DE LANGUE TURCQUE**

SÜREYYA ER, Mehmet (Mr.), Secretary General  
HASANOV, Emin (Mr.), Secretary of the Commission

**PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS****FORUM PARLEMENTAIRE SUR LES ARMES LÉGÈRES ET DE PETIT CALIBRE**

EMAH ETOUNDI, Vincent De Paul (M.), Board Member  
OLOFSSON, Karin (Ms.) Secretary General



**PARLIAMENTARY UNION OF THE OIC MEMBER STATES (PUIC)  
UNION PARLEMENTAIRE DES ETATS MEMBRES DE L’OCI (UPCI)**

NIASS, Mouhamed Khouraiichi (Mr.), Secretary General  
MOHAMMADI SIJANI, Ali Asghar (Mr.), Deputy Secretary General

**SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PARLIAMENTARY FORUM (SADC PF)  
FORUM PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA COMMUNAUTE (SADC)**

MARIMO, Ndamuka (Mr.), Coordinator  
KAUVEE, Samueline (Ms.)

**GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA  
FONDS MONDIAL DE LUTTE CONTRE LE SIDA, LA TUBERCULOSE ET LE PALUDISME**

BOULE, Scott (Mr.), Senior Specialist, Parliamentary Affairs

**SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL**

AYALA, Luis (Mr.), Secretary General  
PERRY, Latifa (Ms.), Coordinator

**INTERNATIONAL IDEA**

WALKER, Ingrid (Ms.)

**SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA  
ORDRE SOUVERAIN DE MALTE**

VERGA, Daniele (Mr.), Ambassador  
MUSY, Jean-Marie (Mr.), Ambassador  
GALEAZZI, Yannick (Mr.), Attaché

**ADVISERS TAKING PART IN THE WORK OF THE 143rd ASSEMBLY  
CONSEILLERS PARTICIPANT AUX TRAVAUX DE LA 143<sup>ème</sup> ASSEMBLEE**

**ARGENTINA – ARGENTINE**

METAZA, Franco (Mr.)

General Director of Foreign Affairs of the Senate

**BULGARIA – BULGARIE**

KILFANOVA, Gabriela (Ms.)

Secretary General, National Assembly

Member of the ASGP

ALEXANDROVA, Stefka (Ms.)

State Expert, International Relations and Protocol,  
National Assembly

Administrative Secretary to the delegation

**IRAQ**

ISMAIL, Serwan Abdullah (Mr.)

Secretary General of the Council of Representatives  
Adviser

MOHAMMED, Ahmed (Mr.)

**SLOVAKIA**

GUSPAN, Daniel (Mr.)

Secretary General of the National Council

**ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE (APF)**

EZA, Mireille (Mme.)

Directrice

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION/PABSEC  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE POUR LA COOPERATION ECONOMIQUE DE LA MER NOIRE**

HAJIYEV, Asaf (Mr.)

Secretary General

**SPECIAL GUESTS TAKING PART IN ACTIVITIES FORESEEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
143rd ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION  
INVITES SPECIAUX PRENANT PART A DES ACTIVITES PREVUES A L'OCCASION DE LA  
143ème ASSEMBLEE DE L'UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE**

**Assembly**

TURK, Danilo (Mr.), President of the World Leadership Alliance – Club de Madrid  
CUEVAS BARRON, Gabriela (Ms.), Honorary IPU President  
DEL PICCHIA, Robert (Mr.), former Senator, France

**Standing Committees**

BAGAYOKO, Niagale Natou (Ms.), Chair of the African Security Sector Network  
GOMEZ, Efraim, Chief of Staff, UNAIDS  
GRIFFIN, Michele (Ms.), Policy Advisor, Executive Office of the Secretary-General  
KHARKOVA, Iaroslava (Ms.), Associate Project Officer, UNESCO  
KOENDERS, Bert (Mr.), Former Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands and former UN SRSG  
LI, Lifeng (Mr.), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)  
LILJA Jannie (Ms), Director of Studies, Peace and Development of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI  
MENTSCHER, Binalakshmi Nepram (Ms.), Co-founder of the Control Arms Foundation of India and of the Manipur Women Gun Survivor Network  
MURUVEN, Dean (Mr.), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)  
O'BRIEN, Katherine (Dr.), Director of Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals, World Health Organization (WHO)  
QASAS, Hiba (Ms.), Head of Secretariat, Principles for Peace  
SWAMINATHAN, Soumya (Dr.), Chief Scientist, World Health Organization (WHO)

**Other Events**

CHAUVEL, Charles (Mr.), Global Lead and Asia-Pacific Focal Point, Inclusive Processes and Institutions, UNDP  
FOUDA, Mohamed (Mr.), Programme Officer, Terrorism Prevention Branch, of the UNODC  
JORRO MARTINEZ, Gonzalo (Mr.), Policy Officer, European Commission (EC)  
KINUTHIA-NJENGA, Cecilia, Director of the Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress Division, UNFCCC  
RUAN, Juan Carlos (Mr.), Director Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit  
SABATÉ GAUXACHS, Alba (Ms.), Deputy Director of the Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture, in Ramon Llull University (Barcelona)  
SCHREY, Denis (Mr.), European Network of Political Foundations (ENOP), Programme Director, KAS  
Multinational Development Policy Dialogue (MDPD)  
STROOBANTS, Serge (Mr.), Director Europe & MENA at the Institute for Economics and Peace

**GLOSSARY / GLOSSAIRE****English****Titles/Functions:**

Speaker of Parliament  
President of the Group

Adviser  
Chair/Chairman/Chairperson  
Clerk  
Deputy Speaker  
Head  
Leader of the Delegation  
Officer  
Researcher  
Secretary of the Group/delegation  
Spokesman

**Parliaments:**

House of Commons  
House of Representatives  
National Assembly  
People's Representatives

**Parliamentary Committees:**

Abroad  
Agreements  
Broadcasting  
Building  
Citizenship  
Complaint Reception  
Computer Science  
Cross-cutting Issues  
Directive Board  
Elderly  
Fishery  
Food  
Foreign Affairs  
Freedoms  
Funding  
Gender Equality  
Growth  
Health/Healthcare  
Heritage  
Home Affairs  
Housing  
Human Rights  
Intelligence  
Investigation/Inquiry  
Joint Committee  
Labour/Work  
Law  
Legal  
Local Self-government  
Missing, Adversely Affected Persons  
Oversight  
People with Disabilities  
Physical Planning, Land Use Planning, Country  
Planning  
Public Expenditure  
Public Works  
Rehabilitation  
Social Welfare  
Standing Committee  
Standing Orders/Rules  
State Device  
Sustainable Development

**Français****Titres/Fonctions :**

*Président du Parlement*  
*Président(e) du Groupe*

*Conseiller*  
*Président(e)*  
*Secrétaire général/Greffier*  
*Vice-Président(e)*  
*Chef*  
*Chef de la délégation*  
*Fonctionnaire*  
*Chercheur*  
*Secrétaire du Groupe/ de la délégation*  
*Porte-parole*

**Parlements :**

*Chambre des Communes*  
*Chambre des représentants*  
*Assemblée nationale*  
*Représentants du peuple*

**Commissions parlementaires :**

*A l'étranger*  
*Approbations*  
*Radiodiffusion*  
*Bâtiment*  
*Citoyenneté*  
*Instruction des plaintes*  
*Informatique*  
*Matières transversales*  
*Comité directeur*  
*Aînés*  
*Pêche*  
*Alimentation*  
*Affaires étrangères*  
*Libertés*  
*Financement*  
*Egalité entre les sexes*  
*Croissance*  
*Santé*  
*Patrimoine*  
*Affaires internes*  
*Logement*  
*Droits de l'homme*  
*Renseignement*  
*Enquête*  
*Comité mixte*  
*Travail*  
*Lois*  
*Juridique*  
*Autonomie locale*  
*Personnes disparues ou lésées*  
*Surveillance*  
*Personnes handicapées*  
*Aménagement du territoire*  
  
*Dépenses publiques*  
*Travaux publics*  
*Réinsertion*  
*Protection sociale*  
*Comité permanent*  
*Règlement*  
*Dispositif étatique*  
*Développement durable*

Trade  
Training  
Truth  
Underprivileged  
Ways and Means  
Wildlife  
Women, Children and Youth

*Commerce  
Formation  
Vérité  
Défavorisés  
Voies et moyens  
Faune  
Les femmes, les enfants et les jeunes*

**IPU Committees:**

Advisory Group on Health  
Bureau of Women Parliamentarians  
Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians  
Committee on Middle East Questions  
Committee to Promote Respect for International  
Humanitarian Law (IHL)  
Executive Committee  
Forum of Young Parliamentarians  
Gender Partnership Group  
Group of Facilitators for Cyprus  
Standing Committee on Peace and International  
Security  
Standing Committee on Sustainable Development,  
Finance and Trade  
Standing Committee on Democracy and Human  
Rights  
Standing Committee on UN Affairs

**Commissions et Comités de l'UIP :**

*Groupe consultatif sur la santé  
Bureau des femmes parlementaires  
Comité des droits de l'homme des parlementaires  
Comité sur les questions relatives au Moyen-Orient  
Comité chargé de promouvoir le respect du droit  
international humanitaire (DIH)  
Comité exécutif  
Forum des jeunes parlementaires  
Groupe du partenariat entre hommes et femmes  
Groupe de facilitateurs concernant Chypre  
Commission permanente de la paix et de la sécurité  
internationale  
Commission permanente du développement durable, du  
financement et du commerce  
Commission permanente de la démocratie et des droits  
de l'homme  
Commission permanente des affaires des Nations Unies*