



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

# IPU Assemblies in your pocket



This booklet provides an overview of the IPU Assembly and focuses on ten key issues:

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*Cross-references are made to the relevant provisions of the IPU's Statutes and Rules. In this document, whenever the words "IPU Member" are used, they should be construed as referring to IPU Member Parliaments.*

# 1. Participation

## IPU Members

Every parliament constituted in conformity with the laws of a sovereign State whose population it represents and on whose territory it functions may join the [IPU](#).

→ *Ref. Statutes: Article 3.1*

## Associate Members

International parliamentary assemblies established under international law by States which are represented in the IPU may, upon their request and after consultation with the relevant Members of the IPU, be admitted by the Governing Council as [Associate Members](#).

→ *Ref. Statutes: Article 3.5*

## Permanent Observers

Permanent observer status has been granted to some 70 organizations, enabling them to attend and actively participate in our twice-yearly Assemblies. Categories of [Permanent Observers](#):

- a) Organizations of the UN System;
- b) Regional intergovernmental organizations;
- c) Regional or geopolitical parliamentary assemblies/ associations;
- d) Worldwide non-governmental organizations;
- e) International political party federations; and
- f) Organizations with which the IPU has a mutually beneficial working relationship.

## Size of delegations

	Number of delegates* (voting and speaking rights)
IPU Members	<b>8</b> (less than 100 million inhabitants) or <b>10</b> (more than 100 million) <b>+ 1 young MP</b> <i>Unless entitlement modified – see below</i>
Associate Members	<b>8</b> (no voting rights)* <i>Unless entitlement modified – see below</i>
Permanent Observers	<b>2</b> (no voting rights)

→ *Ref. Statutes: Article 5.2.* In the case of arrears (**2 years**), the number of delegates that may participate in the Assembly is limited, as follows:

IPU Members	<b>2</b> parliamentary delegates
Associate Members	<b>1</b> delegate

According to new amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules, Members with **more than 3 years'** arrears of their contributions to the IPU budget become **non-participating members** of the Organization (suspension of rights, including participating in IPU Assemblies).

*\* In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that official delegates be limited to 5 and 7 MPs, respectively.*

## 2. Structure of an IPU Assembly

The Assembly is the IPU's main political body. It meets twice a year with a programme which includes:

- General debate;
- Consideration of proposals and adoption of an emergency item; and
- Adoption of Standing Committees' resolutions and reports.

All the main IPU bodies also convene in the course of the Assembly week:

- The [Executive Committee](#) oversees the IPU's administration and makes recommendations to the Governing Council.
- The [Governing Council](#) is the IPU's administrative and policy-making body. It admits, readmits and suspends Members. It adopts the IPU Strategy, budget and work programme, sets the terms of reference of the Standing Committees and the Council's subsidiary bodies, and approves amendments to the Statutes and Rules.
- The four [Standing Committees](#), which focus on peace and security; sustainable development; democracy and human rights; and UN Affairs, discuss relevant issues and adopt resolutions (the Standing Committee on UN Affairs does not adopt resolutions).
- The [Forum of Women Parliamentarians](#) leads IPU's work to redress gender imbalance in political representation in national parliaments, within IPU bodies and Assemblies. It submits amendments incorporating a gender perspective into the Standing Committees' work.
- The [Forum of Young Parliamentarians](#) debates Assembly subject items from a youth perspective and makes recommendations to the governing bodies.

- The [Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians](#) examines violations of the human rights of MPs and proposes avenues of redress.
- The [Committee on Middle East Questions](#) fosters regular dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian MPs.
- The [Group of Facilitators for Cyprus](#) meets, once a year at the Assembly, with representatives of political parties from both communities of the island, on the basis of political equality.
- The [Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law](#) advocates for the protection of civilians and combatants in conflict around the world through the adoption and ratification of relevant laws and treaties.
- The IPU [High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism](#) guides and monitors the IPU plan of action for parliaments in this area and aims to bridge gaps in the implementation of relevant IPU and UN resolutions.
- The [Advisory Group on Health](#) spearheads the IPU's work on health.
- The [Working Group on Science and Technology](#) serves as the global parliamentary focal point on these issues.

Several side events, including Workshops and Panel discussions, are also held.

## General debate

A general debate on an overall theme takes place in Plenary at each IPU Assembly.

Each parliamentary delegation may register a maximum of three speakers, if the third speaker is a young MP (under 45 years of age).

### ***Registration and order of speakers***

Delegates must register in order to take the floor, either by returning the pre-registration form available on the Assembly documents' page or at the speakers' registration desk (outside the plenary hall). Registration opens 24 hours before the start of the general debate and closes on the second day of the Assembly.

The order of speakers is determined by the public drawing of lots on the eve of the first Assembly sitting.

### ***Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Assembly***

When the IPU meets outside of Geneva, it is traditionally the Speaker of the host parliament who is elected Assembly President. In Geneva, the IPU President fulfils the role. All IPU Members may designate one of their delegates as an Assembly Vice-President (Assembly Rule 7.3). A Vice-President will replace the President of the Assembly during a sitting or part of a sitting.

### ***Speaking time in the General Debate***

The Assembly Steering Committee (composed of Assembly President, IPU President, and Vice-President of the Executive Committee, as well as the Standing Committee Presidents) may adjust speaking time to ensure the smooth running of the debates. The following figures are provided as guidance.



	Number of speakers	Total time per delegation
IPU Members and Associate members	2 + 1 young MP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· High-level segment (Presiding officers): <b>7 minutes</b></li> <li>· One speaker (non-presiding officer): <b>6 minutes</b></li> <li>· Two speakers: <b>up to 7 minutes</b></li> <li>· Young MP: <b>2 additional minutes</b></li> </ul>
Permanent Observers	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>3 minutes</b></li> </ul>

## Emergency item

Any IPU Member may request the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda. It should relate to a recent major situation of international concern on which urgent action by the international community is required.

After adoption of the emergency item, a debate is held the next day in plenary (see section on Resolutions and other Outcomes of the Assembly for more information).

→ *Ref. Statutes: Article 14.2 and Assembly Rule 11.*

## Vacancies

Member Parliaments may submit candidatures for the [main committees and bodies of the IPU](#), once the Vacancies' notice is published on the Assembly webpage, bearing in mind the gender balance requirements of the bodies concerned, as provided for in the IPU Statutes and Rules. Candidates should have expertise, as far as possible, in the areas of work of the given bodies, and should be supported by their respective parliament in carrying out their functions as IPU office-holders, including regular attendance at IPU Assemblies. New Members of the IPU and Members not currently holding IPU offices are particularly encouraged to submit candidatures.

## Other meetings

In addition to the statutory meetings mentioned above, delegations can also organize **bilateral meetings** (contact [conf.services@ipu.org](mailto:conf.services@ipu.org) for more details).

**Field visits** related to Assembly themes are organized in cooperation with local partners, when the IPU meets abroad. Participants may register for the field visit (numbers limited) through the IPU submission and control of documents' service.

**Side events** on topics of particular interest to the parliamentary community also take place during the Assembly.

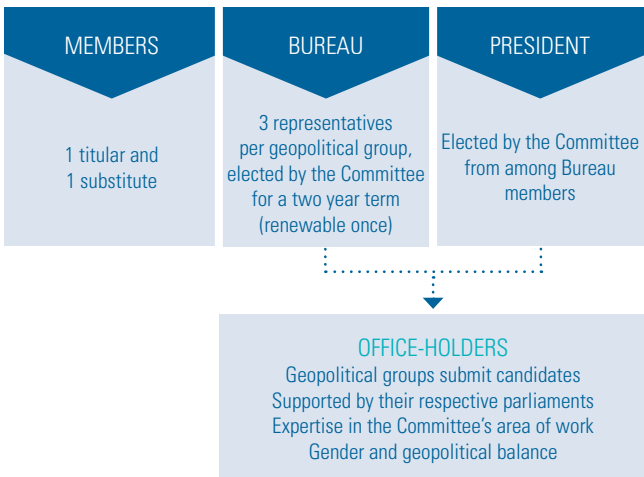
### 3. Assembly Standing Committees

The Assembly has four Standing Committees. A key part of their work is the preparation of resolutions which go on to be adopted by the Assembly and become the IPU's political statements.

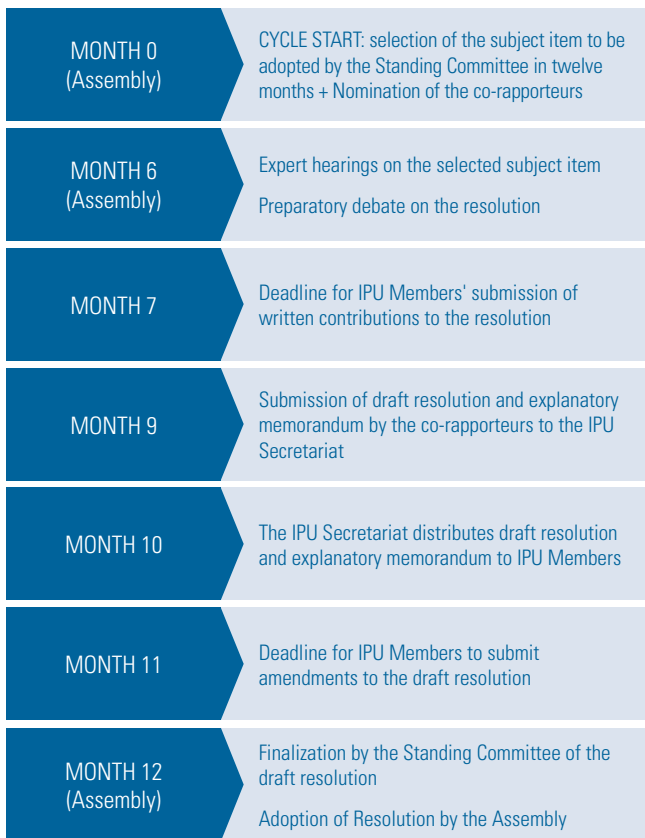
The respective areas of work are:

1. Peace and International Security;
2. Sustainable Development;
3. Democracy and Human Rights; and
4. United Nations Affairs (this Committee does not adopt resolutions).

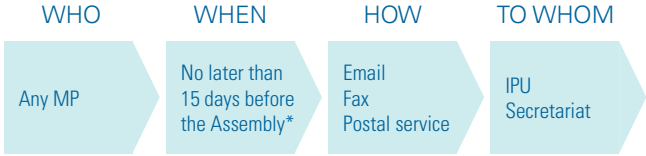
#### Composition



## Milestones in the preparation of a Standing Committee resolution (one year cycle over three Assemblies)



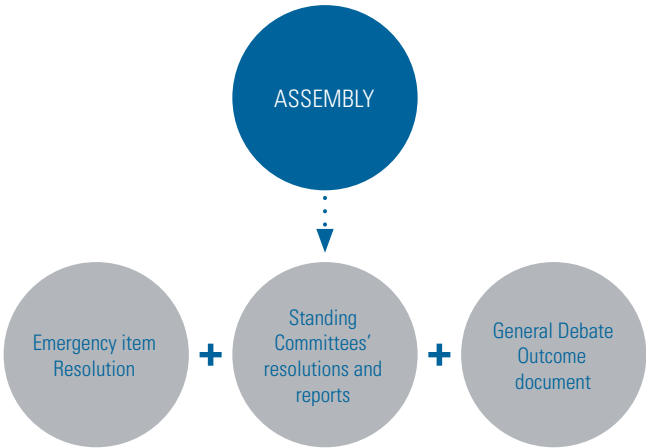
## Amendments to draft resolutions prepared by the rapporteurs



→ *Ref. Assembly Rule 17*

\* *The Forum of Women MPs submits amendments (on the eve of the first sitting of the Standing Committee) incorporating a gender perspective.*

## 4. Resolutions, decisions and other outcome documents



### Emergency item Resolution

Any IPU Member may request the inclusion of an emergency item on the Assembly agenda. All proposals should be accompanied by a brief explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution, clearly defining the scope of the item requested for inclusion.

The Assembly holds a roll-call vote on the first day to decide which proposed item to include in the agenda. A request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast to be accepted.

The emergency item is generally debated in the morning of the second day of the Assembly. A drafting committee meets (each geopolitical group is represented) to prepare a draft resolution, which is submitted to the Assembly for adoption on the penultimate day.

→ *Ref. Assembly Rule 11*

## **Standing Committee Resolutions and Reports**

A Resolution is a formal statement by the IPU Assembly on a political issue and results from a process of consultation, debate, deliberation and negotiation. Resolutions contain recommendations for action mainly by parliaments, but can also be addressed to governments, the United Nations and other bodies. The Assembly votes on the texts proposed by the Standing Committees without holding a debate on the substance.

At the close of its work, the Assembly takes note of the Standing Committees' reports.

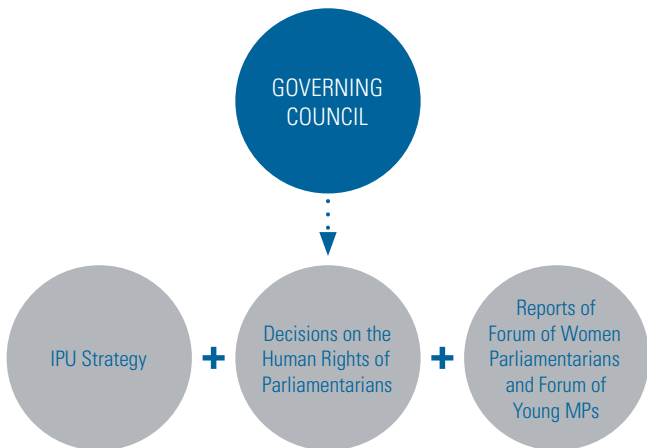
## **General Debate Outcome document**

The Outcome document is an official declaration by the IPU Assembly on its overall theme. It is the result of the deliberations and debates during the Assembly. It is the road map for action by the global parliamentary community.

All IPU Members commit to translating it into concrete policies and legislation at national level.

→ *Ref. Assembly Rule 15*

## Examples of reports, decisions and other texts adopted by the Governing Council



### IPU Strategy

The Strategy is drafted under the guidance of IPU Member Parliaments. It sets the vision, mission and objectives of the Organization. It outlines the actions that the IPU community must undertake in order to accomplish its agenda and the two overarching goals of building strong, democratic parliaments and mobilizing them around the global development agenda. In 2021, the Governing Council approved the current IPU Strategy (2022-2026).



## **Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians' Decisions**

The IPU's Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians is a unique body that defends the human rights of MPs whenever their rights are at risk. It examines complaints concerning MPs who have been killed, attacked, intimidated or jailed for their political views during the exercise of their mandate. During Assemblies, it is the IPU membership as a whole, through the Governing Council, which approves the Committee's decisions and echoes its views, hence underscoring the importance of parliamentary solidarity in obtaining protection and redress. The Committee and the IPU membership do not give up and continue to speak out on cases until a satisfactory solution is reached.

## **Reports of Forums, committees and other bodies**

During its last sitting, the Governing Council takes note of the reports of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, the Forum of Young MPs, its Committees and other bodies.

# 5. Voting procedures

## The basic rules

	Assembly (weighted system)	Governing Council	Standing Committees
IPU Members	<b>10 votes*</b> + additional votes (size of national population)	<b>3 votes</b> (mixed gender delegation)  <b>1 vote</b> (single gender)	<b>1 vote</b> (titular or substitute)

*\* Reduced to eight for Parliaments that, for two consecutive sessions, have sent delegations composed exclusively of MPs of the same sex.*

## Methods of voting

### Quorum

The Governing Council quorum and that of the Assembly are established during their first sittings and announced, respectively, at the end of the sitting. All Governing Council members should, therefore, be present in the room for the whole of the first sitting. For the Assembly, a parliament entitled to 10 votes should ensure that one MP is in the room: 10 to 19 votes require 2 MPs (regardless of sex) to be in attendance; and 20+ votes need 3 parliamentarians to be in the Plenary.

## Assembly

As a political organization, the IPU has unique voting procedures.

Assembly votes are held by a public roll-call.

The Assembly uses a **weighted voting system**, based on a given country's population size and the composition of its delegation (gender balance). One of the IPU's particularities is that national delegations are encouraged to include parliamentarians from different political parties. The weighted voting system gives a delegation the possibility, should it so wish, to split its votes in order to express the diverse views of its delegates.

→ [Ref. Statutes: Article 15.3](#)

Each delegation has a minimum of 10 votes, with additional votes depending on the national population. For example, a country with a population between 1 and 5 million is entitled to one additional vote, and countries with more than 300 million inhabitants have an additional 13 votes.

→ [Ref. Statutes: Article 15.2](#)

Delegations comprised of only one MP will be limited to 10 votes, as no delegate may cast more than 10 votes. Only delegates **present in person**, at the time of the vote, shall have the right to vote.

Any delegation that, for two consecutive sessions, is composed exclusively of MPs of the same sex will have a minimum of eight votes (instead of 10 for mixed delegations) at the Assembly. For delegations entitled to additional votes, the overall calculation will be based on eight votes instead of ten.

→ [Ref. Statutes: Articles 15.1, 15.2\(c\)](#)

**Assembly decisions are taken** by a majority of the votes cast, with the exception of votes on the **emergency item**, which must receive a **two-thirds majority** of the votes cast. When a specified majority is required, the number of affirmative votes must be equal to at least one third of the total number of votes allocated to delegations participating in the Assembly.

→ *Ref. Assembly Rules: 11.2, 28, and 34.*

Once the vote has closed, the Assembly President announces the results.

## Voting procedures

### Governing Council

All IPU Members, irrespective of their size or economic development, have the same number of three votes in the Governing Council, provided that the delegation includes both men and women and that they are **present in the room** at the time of the vote. Single gender delegations will be limited to one member and hence, to one vote.

→ *Ref. Governing Council Rule 1*

The Governing Council normally votes by show of hands or by standing vote, with the exception of the election of the IPU President, the election of the Secretary General and the election of Executive Committee members, when voting is by secret ballot.

→ *Ref. Council Rule 30*

In general, **decisions are taken by a majority of the votes cast**. In some circumstances, such as the request for the inclusion of a supplementary item on the Governing Council

agenda, either by a majority of votes cast, or by a two thirds majority of votes cast (depending on when the request is submitted) is required. For the election of the IPU President, the absolute majority of votes cast is required.

→ *Ref. Governing Council Rules: 8, 12, 13, 35, 39 and 45.*

Once the vote has closed, the IPU President announces the result.

### **Standing Committees**

The right to vote can be exercised by the titular members of the Standing Committees (one representative from each IPU Member), or in their absence by their substitutes. Decisions are taken by show of hands or by roll-call vote. It is for the Committee's President to decide on the method of voting to be followed. If a vote takes place by secret ballot, its results must be ascertained by two tellers appointed by the Committee on the President's proposal.

Amendments to a draft resolution are discussed and voted on by show of hands. Sub-amendments are discussed at the same time as the amendments to which they relate and are voted on before the amendments concerned.

Voting may not be interrupted once it has commenced, except to request clarification on the manner in which the voting is being conducted. Delegates wishing to explain their vote briefly may be authorized to do so by the President, after the voting has been completed. **Decisions are taken by a majority of the votes cast.**

→ *Ref. Standing Committees Rules 2; 24; 25 and 34 to 40.*

## 6. Rights of delegates

### Rights to speak, to move amendments, to vote

	Right to speak	Right to move amendments	Right to vote
IPU Members	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b> unless rights are suspended
Associate Members	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO
Permanent Observers	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO

→ Ref. Statutes: Article 15. Assembly Rules 2, 21, 22

## **Suspension of the right to vote** (arrears of contributions)

Any IPU Member which is in arrears of its financial contributions (two full years or more) loses its voting rights. If non-payment is due to reasons beyond the Member's control, the Governing Council may, as a matter of exception, give the Member permission to vote.

→ *Ref. Statutes: Article 5.2*

## 7. Motions, points of order, abusive language and right of reply

### Motions

A motion may relate to:

- Adjournment of the debate sine die;
- Adjournment of the debate;
- Closure of the list of speakers;
- Closure or adjournment of the meeting; or
- Any other matter having a bearing on the conduct of the meeting.

Procedural motions have priority over substantive questions. Debate on substantive questions will be suspended while procedural motions are being considered.

### Procedure

The mover makes a brief presentation of the motion without entering into the substance of the question under debate.

During a debate on procedural motions, only the mover of the proposal and one delegate holding a contrary opinion will be heard, each of whom may speak for no more than three minutes, after which the Assembly takes a decision.

→ *Ref. Assembly Rule 26*

### Points of order

A speaker may only be interrupted by other delegates on a point of order so as to draw the President's attention to infringement of Assembly Rule 24 (non-respect of the subject of the debate or abusive language).



In such instances, the President rules immediately and without debate on all points of order.

→ *Ref. Assembly Rules 23.3 and 4*

## Abusive language

According to the Rules of the Assembly, the conduct of delegates should be characterized by mutual respect, be based on the values and principles of the IPU as laid down in its IPU Statutes and Rules, and should respect the dignity of all people. Furthermore, it should not compromise the smooth conduct of business.

During debates held in the context of IPU meetings, speakers should refrain from using defamatory, intolerant, sexist, racist or xenophobic language.

The Chair of the meeting will call to order any speaker who disrupts the smooth conduct of the proceedings. If use of objectionable language is repeated, the Chairperson will call the speaker to order a second time, and the incident will be recorded in the minutes.

Should any speaker fail to respect these norms, the Chair will withdraw his or her permission to speak and request that the objectionable words be struck from the record (written and digital).

→ *Ref. Assembly Rule 24*

## Right of reply

The Chair may, at the end of the corresponding sitting, give the floor briefly to a delegation wishing to exercise its right of reply.

→ *Ref. Assembly Rule 22.2*

Delegates wishing to exercise their right of reply should inform the Presidency through the Secretariat. They may exercise briefly their right of reply at the end of the sitting and will speak from their seats. The right of reply should address a specific point or points in a speech which the speaker requesting it finds offensive or inaccurate. There is no right of reply to the right of reply.

## 8. Geopolitical groups

### GEOPOLITICAL GROUPS

African group  
Arab group  
Asia-Pacific group  
Eurasia group  
Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)  
Twelve Plus group

### FUNCTIONS

Coordinate group's positions on key issues

Review vacancies, consult Members and propose candidates – ensuring fair representation from around the world on all IPU bodies.

Facilitate consultations on proposals for debates and resolutions on emergency item.

Shape and review implementation of main policies.

→ *Ref. Statutes: Article 27*

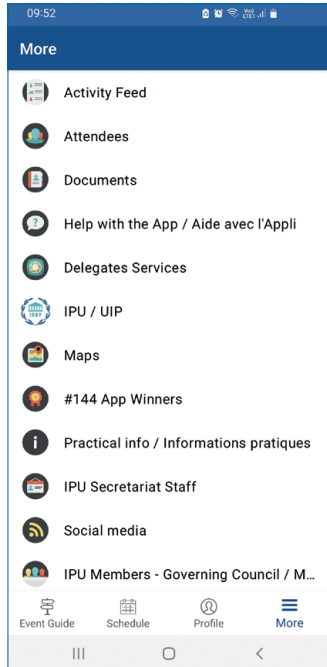
## 9. Assembly App

The Assembly App is available at each IPU Assembly.

The App facilitates online consultation of official IPU documents (IPU paper smart policy). It enhances delegates' participation in IPU Assemblies and enables networking with other delegates. The daily programme is available on the App and the latest updates through push notifications.

The App is available from the App store on iOS devices and Play Store on Android. Search for IPU events. Once downloaded, open the app and enter the corresponding Assembly session number prefaced by #IPU, i.e. #IPU144. Alternatively, the IPU Secretariat will be pleased to send delegates an invitation by email ([conf.services@ipu.org](mailto:conf.services@ipu.org)).

The hard-coded text of the App is available in English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish and all content is available in English and French.



## 10. Assembly follow-up

IPU Assemblies do not end with the closing session.

IPU Members have the obligation to make all structural, administrative and financial provisions required to implement IPU decisions.

→ *Ref. Statutes: Articles 6 and 7*

**IPU Members are expected to make sure that:**

