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Fourth Expert Roundtable on the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments *Agile parliaments for the future*

Online, 15 December 2022

ROUNDTABLE REPORT

Background

The Common Principles were adopted by the 131st IPU Assembly in October 2014 and have since been endorsed by 146 – or 76% of national parliaments and 30 partner organizations.

The Principles are intended to provide a summary of what is most important and aspirational in parliamentary development and to be a common language that all actors involved can share. With the ten-year anniversary of the Common Principles approaching in 2024, the Fourth Expert Roundtable:

- Took stock of the last eight years since the Principles were adopted. The participants deliberated on the achievements, impacts, and challenges in applying the Common Principles by parliaments and partners.
- Looked to the future and the rapidly evolving environment faced by parliaments. Participants discussed how parliaments could prepare themselves to be more anticipatory and agile institutions in the face of disruption and accelerating change.

Through the lens of these two dimensions, the Roundtable elicited exchanges of ideas and experiences on how to strengthen the field of parliamentary self-development and shape the next 10-year chapter of the Common Principles.

Forty-five participants took part in the Expert Roundtable, representing 23 national and regional parliaments and 4 partner organizations.

Introductory remarks

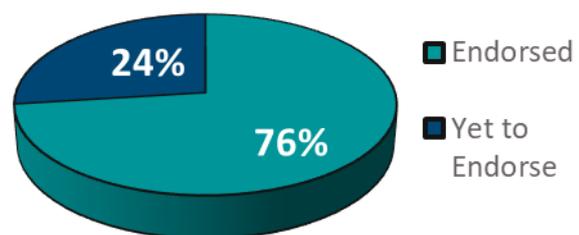
Ms. Norah Babic, Manager of the IPU Technical Cooperation Programme, welcomed participants and spoke of the continued relevance of the Common Principles. The IPU was encouraged that they were now endorsement by 76% of national parliaments.

Remarks were also made by Ms. Doina Ghimici, Advisor on Parliamentary Development for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Ms. Ghimici described the complex and challenging global environment parliaments faced. Change was accelerating exponentially, and parliaments must keep up and be more anticipatory, adaptive, agile, and centres of continuous learning. That included better leveraging technological opportunities, doing more with less resources, and placing public trust at the centre of work.

Session 1: Key achievements, impacts and challenges in applying the Common Principles by parliaments and partners.

This first session looked back on the last eight years to consider successes and areas of difficulty for parliaments in applying the Common Principles. It was moderated by Ms. Adriana Buchiu, Representative from the Parliamentary Support and Capacity Building Unit of the European Parliament.

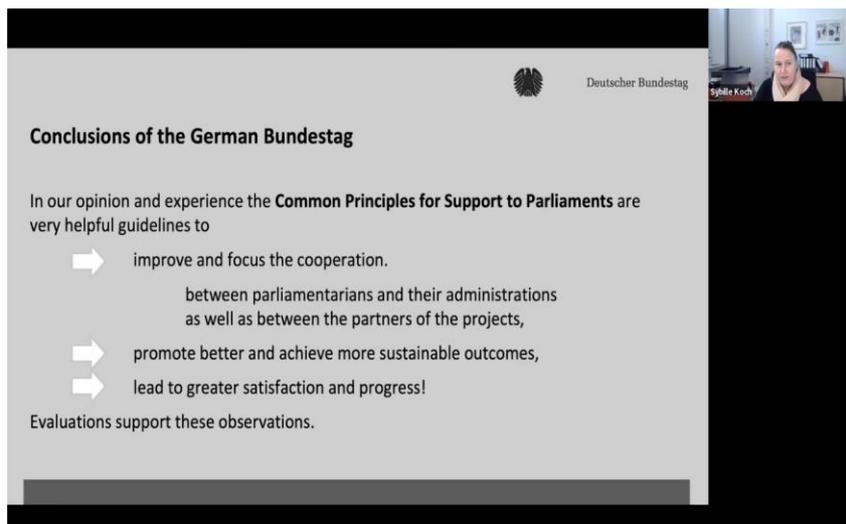
National Parliament Endorsements





Mr. Najib El Khadi, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP) and Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Morocco, discussed the importance of the international parliamentary community working together and having such exchanges on parliamentary development. He highlighted the Common Principles, and IPU's publication [Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice](#), as key reference points. Although the Common Principles were still relevant, parliaments were increasingly evolving to be more digital and to better take the environment into account in their work. The ASGP was working on new toolkits on digital parliaments, and the role and functions of Secretaries General, to further enrich the parliamentary community. Mr. El Khadi also highlighted the role of the parliamentary administration in helping balance continuity and institutional memory with political change.

Ms. Sybille Koch, Head of International Exchange Programmes in the German Bundestag, explained that the Bundestag always applied the Common Principles in its work which led to greater satisfaction and progress in support to parliaments. She provided a number of case studies and examples of practical ways the Bundestag was applying each of the Common Principles. That included mixing diverse stakeholders in



parliamentary development work (for example, members of the administration, diverse political parties, other partners) and preparatory work to enhance sensitivity to local contexts, to name a couple. Ms. Koch also emphasized the benefit of staff and MPs working together in an equitable manner to improve sustainable outcomes. The pandemic had accelerated the rise of greater virtual engagements, especially for planning and following-up of interventions, and this has led to sharp increases in effectiveness and satisfaction. She also underlined the importance of parliaments themselves coordinating support with all stakeholders involved in projects as a key for effective support.

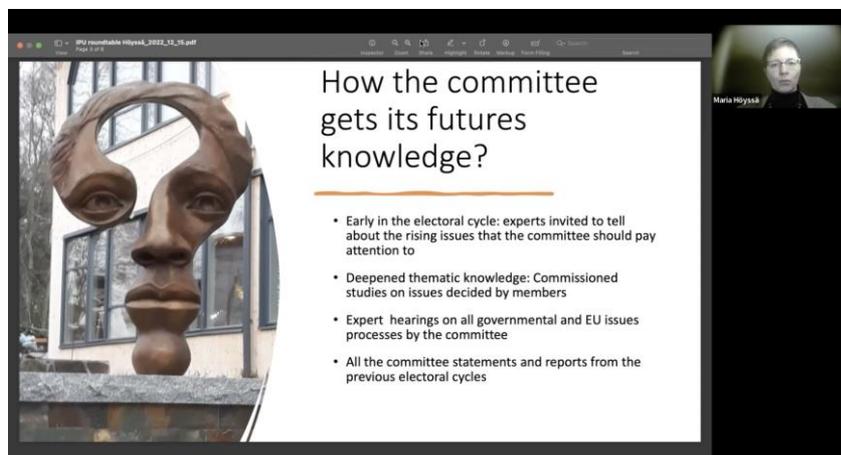
Participants raised the following additional insights in the interactive discussions:

- As highlighted in previous Roundtables, there was a strong link between parliamentary support being guided by the needs of parliaments (Common Principle 1) and aiming for sustainable outcomes (Common Principle 3). The more a parliament was driving its own development, the more sustainable an intervention was likely to be.
- It was important to strengthen the link between parliaments and the citizens, including to increase public trust and engage with young people. Participants raised examples like citizen assemblies, using social media most utilized by youth, online petitions, and other practices, including from the [IPU's and UNDP's Global Parliamentary Report 2022: Public engagement in the work of parliament](#).
- The IPU, along with other partners, developed a preliminary set of [parliamentary Indicators for Democratic Parliaments](#) which comprehensively covered over 100 dimensions of parliamentary performance, and was available to all seeking to better monitor and evaluate their work.

Session 2: New emerging priority needs for parliamentary development, as well as opportunities and threats.

The second session was devoted to looking ahead to the future and how parliaments can improve their work and be more resilient to shocks in a rapidly changing environment. It was moderated by Ms. Norah Babic, Manager of the Technical Cooperation Programme of the IPU.

Ms. Maria Höyssä, Senior Advisor, Committee for the Future, Parliament of Finland, showcased the Committee which was established in 1993 and gave insights on how it was helping decision-makers prepare for uncertain future developments. In addition to anticipating large-scale changes, such as through parliamentary reports on the transformation of



work, well-being through sustainable growth, Finland's long-term climate policy, and more, the Committee was also mandated to improve innovation within the parliament. The Committee's latest initiative was to create an international dialogue with other Committees for the Future around the world. This resulted in a World Summit held in Helsinki in October 2022.

Mr. Rodrigo Goñi Reyes, President, Special Committee on the Future of the General Assembly of Uruguay, invited participants to the next Summit on Committees on the Future which would be hosted by Uruguay in October 2023. This would be open to all parliaments of the world, regardless of whether they had committees on the future or not. He stressed the importance of parliaments

“Parliaments do not only represent the interests of current generations, but future ones as well”

working hand in hand to adopt new and common methodologies to confront accelerating change and to better collaborate and learn from each other. This would also entail building new anticipatory skills and capacity-building within parliament. The importance of ensuring continuity alongside changing political landscapes was highlighted, as was the importance of diversity among stakeholders and across countries to have as much knowledge and expertise included.

Mr. Mwaula Solopi, Principal Clerk (ICT) of the National Assembly of Zambia, presented the very practical ways that parliaments can increase the use of technology in their work. He highlighted that local considerations were important to consider and that as parliaments were at different levels of digital maturity they therefore faced “different futures”. Driving new technologies in parliament was not just the responsibility of ICT teams, but of all stakeholders. Key ingredients to the success of Zambia's ICT plan included: buy-in of senior leadership, involving MPs directly in this work to enhance their ownership, and integrating its efforts with the parliament's subsequent monitoring and evaluation strategy. The importance of securing IT

“Lifelong learning... learning to unlearn, in order to learn again”

“The future for one parliament may be different than another based on their differing circumstances”

systems from potential threats (cyber-threats) and creating platforms for greater citizen engagement, as well as continuous training for MPs and staff were underlined. The importance of collaborating with other parliaments and experts, as demonstrated by the experience of the National Assembly in hosting the South

African hub for the Centre for Innovation in Parliament, was also highlighted as a way of encouraging learning and skills-building.

Throughout the presentations and discussions, many participants highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as an accelerator for innovation and the use of more digital technologies.

Closing remarks

Ms. Laurence Marzal, Programme Officer from the Technical Cooperation Programme of the IPU, summarized the meeting. She flagged a number of dimensions that came out of the discussions that could be considered in future parliamentary development discussions, including citizen participation, greater use of new technologies for public engagement (especially for young people); stronger integration of modern technologies in how parliaments enhance their resilience, as well as through bodies designed to help parliaments anticipate emerging trends, like committees on the future.

The Roundtable kicked off the start of a new chapter for the Common Principles in view of its tenth anniversary in 2024. The participants were warmly thanked for their contributions, which would help inform future orientations of the Common Principles in general, but more importantly in the future of parliamentary self-development. Parliaments and/or partners were also invited to initiate their own activities related to the Common Principles, including by hosting (or co-hosting with the IPU) future meetings.

Annex I: Summary of good practices for successful parliamentary development highlighted during the Roundtable:

- ✓ Increasing use of new technologies and remote meeting possibilities, usage of which was greatly accelerated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Careful attention should be given to cyber security.
- ✓ Increasingly taking the environment into account in support work and considering ecological impacts.
- ✓ Strengthening engagement between parliaments and the citizens, including by better using social media, citizen assemblies, and online petitions.
- ✓ Establishing parliamentary bodies (for example, committees on the future) that are mandated to anticipate and respond to tectonic societal change. Such bodies can also serve to enhance innovation in parliament. Also, building knowledge and skills within parliament on such topics to better anticipate change and respond.
- ✓ Strengthening engagement and collaboration between parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to drive self-development efforts.
- ✓ Increasing dialogue and exchange between parliaments to establish a common understanding and methodology on managing large-scale change.
- ✓ Prioritizing monitoring and evaluation to foster continuous learning.