



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

CL/211/SR
12 May 2023

Summary records of the Governing Council

211th session

12 and 15 March 2023

Exhibition World Bahrain, Manama, Bahrain

Agenda

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First sitting

Sunday, 12 March 2023
(Morning)

The sitting was called to order at 09:40 with Mr. D. Pacheco, President of the IPU, in the Chair.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

The President, warmly welcoming participants and expressing gratitude to the Bahraini authorities for their generous hospitality and impressive organization of the 146th IPU Assembly, said that parliamentarians had a special responsibility to work together for a better life of peaceful coexistence, in accordance with the wishes of those whom they represented. He was particularly pleased to welcome three special guests participating in the Assembly with a view to possible affiliation or reaffiliation with the IPU: Ms. Jewel Howard-Taylor, Vice-President of Liberia and President of the Senate of Liberia; Ms. Julie LaShell Adderley, President of the Senate of the Bahamas; and Ms. Tangariki Reete, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Kiribati. He looked forward to their full participation in the IPU's work were they to join the Organization, which would have the added benefit of bringing the IPU closer to its goal of universal membership.

The Secretary General, also welcoming participants, expressed confidence that all the arrangements in place for the Assembly would be conducive to smooth deliberations.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Türkiye), requesting to take the floor in connection with the recent Türkiye-Syria earthquake, said that the event had wreaked devastation over a wide area of her country, directly or indirectly affecting 20 million of its inhabitants and causing over 45,000 deaths. Visiting the area in the immediate aftermath, she and fellow Turkish parliamentarians had heard horrifying accounts of family loss but had also seen the inspiring expression of humanity, as exemplified by the dispatch of international teams to provide valuable search and rescue assistance. It had been humbling for Türkiye — the world's largest donor of development aid as a percentage of gross national income — to be on the receiving end of that assistance. On behalf of the Turkish people, she thanked IPU Members for their demonstrations of care and concern for the communities hit by the disaster.

The President said that moments of crisis brought out human solidarity, but the fewer such moments there were in future the better. On another note, he regretted to inform participants that Ms. Ivonne Passada, former Vice-President of the IPU and President of the House of Representatives of Uruguay, had passed away the previous night. On behalf of the IPU, he expressed condolences to her parliamentary colleagues and wished her family strength in their time of sorrow.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CL/211/A.1-rev.1)

The President drew attention to the provisional agenda set out in document CL/211/A.1-rev.1.

Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), observing that the proposed IPU policy to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at IPU Assemblies and other IPU events, as discussed at the preceding session, did not feature on the provisional agenda, requested an update on its preparation.

The Secretary General said that the Working Group on Transparency, Accountability and Openness had been engaged in preparing the policy and was due to provide the Executive Committee, at its upcoming sitting, with a progress report.

The President suggested that the matter of the proposed policy could be addressed, as necessary, under item 18 of the agenda, which dealt with any other business.

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

**APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 210TH SESSION
OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
(CL/210/SR)**

The summary records of the 210th session of the Governing Council were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 146TH ASSEMBLY

At the proposal of Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates), seconded by Ms. S. Gafarova (Azerbaijan), Ms. P. Krairiksh (Thailand), Ms. B. Argimón (Uruguay), Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Türkiye), Mr. A Touizi (Morocco) and Mr. S.S. Al Barkani (Yemen), Mr. A.B.S. Almusalam (Bahrain) was elected President of the 146th Assembly by acclamation.

Mr. A.B.S. Almusalam (Bahrain), expressing appreciation to the Governing Council for its trust in having elected him as President of the Assembly, said that he was confident of successful deliberations that would promote communication among peoples and breathe new life into parliamentary democracy so as to further advance joint parliamentary action. He would do his utmost to work with Members through constructive dialogue and in-depth discussion to achieve the goals sought, above all in respect of strengthening efforts for peace and reconciliation and rejecting fanaticism and extremism. He hoped that the Assembly hosted by his country would stand as a milestone along the way for the IPU.

Item 4 of the agenda

CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP

**(a) Request for reaffiliation of the Parliament of Liberia
(CL/211/4(a)-P.1)**

The President said that, to achieve the goal of universal membership, it remained for the IPU to attract into its fold a final 15 parliaments from among the Member States of the United Nations, including the United States of America and various small-island developing States in the Caribbean and Pacific regions. The IPU's continuing efforts to that end had recently borne fruit in the form of a request for reaffiliation from the Senate of Liberia, as detailed in document CL/211/4(a)-P.1. Having considered the request, the Executive Committee had recommended its approval by the Governing Council.

Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) said that it would be an honour for the IPU to have the Parliament of Liberia, one of its founding Members, back in the fold.

The President, agreeing with that sentiment, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve by acclamation the Liberian request.

It was so decided.

Ms. J. Howard-Taylor (Liberia), in thanking the Governing Council for its decision, said that she was humbled to accept on behalf of her Senate the IPU's call for its return to the fold after a long absence. Since its founding in 1889, the IPU had become a parliament of not only nations but of people playing global roles to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development the world over. It provided a safe space for all parliaments to engage in dialogue on wide-ranging issues of common concern and had moved into the sphere of multilateralism in pursuit of a more equitable and peaceful world.

Key to the IPU's fundamental principles and activities were the two urgent challenges of gender equality and climate change. Despite myriad global calls, gender equality was improving only very slowly; even in parliament, women's representation averaged around just 25%. With gender equality lagging so far behind and given its critical link with social equity, better living standards and climate action, real reforms were needed to shift the balance in favour of the women constituting one half of the world's population. By contrast, strong financial support had been put in place in response to the many appeals for action on climate change. There was no better forum than the IPU, as a global force for good, through which to push for an equal focus on gender equality. Without robust measures to ensure that women were not left behind, all work towards peaceful coexistence and sustainable development would remain below the standards set by the IPU. She therefore hoped that the deliberations during the 146th IPU Assembly would reflect the true aspirations and needs of all global inhabitants, including women and girls, and thereby lead to appropriate action on issues of importance to the entire world.

The President said that he was pleased to welcome another parliament into the IPU membership and all the more so in the case of a founding Member.

**(b) Amendments to the Practical modalities of the rights
and responsibilities of observers at IPU meetings
(CL/211/4(b)-P.1)**

The President drew attention to amendments proposed to the *Practical modalities of the rights and responsibilities of observers at IPU meetings*, as set out in the annex to CL/211/4(b)-P.1, following a review recommended by the Governing Council at its preceding session.

The Secretary General, introducing those amendments and recalling that the review had been recommended in light of the growing number of requests from partner organizations for observer status, said that the proposal was for permanent observer status to be granted only as recommended by the Executive Committee following a careful examination of the structure, functioning, mission statement, programme of work and track record of the organization concerned, with a focus on impact and deliverables. Observer status would furthermore be reserved primarily for parliamentary organizations that shared the IPU's objectives in line with its mandate and ambition to foster inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation. Lastly, observers wishing to participate in an IPU Assembly would be required to pay a token registration fee as a contribution towards running costs and as a demonstration of their genuine commitment to the IPU's work. UN organizations and observers contributing directly to the programme of an Assembly would, however, be exempt from such fees.

It was also proposed to restructure the categories of permanent observers into United Nations and related organizations, parliamentary assemblies and associations, international non-governmental organizations, international political party federations, and other partner organizations. In addition, entities that had remained dormant in terms of their participation in IPU activities over the years would be removed from the list but remain free to submit a new request for observer status, if desired. Current examples included the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Organization of American States.

The President, emphasizing the aim of ensuring that organizations with permanent observer status engaged fully with the IPU so as to benefit its activities, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the proposed amendments.

It was so decided.

Item 5 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(a) On his activities since the 210th session of the Governing Council

The President, accompanying his report with a digital slide presentation, said that the first aim of his activities in the six months since the 210th session of the Governing Council had been to reinforce the IPU's visibility so as to bring its multitude of activities to wider attention. He had accordingly participated in as many of those activities as possible, visiting in the process over 20 countries and taking the opportunity in addition to meet university students, give interviews and hold press conferences. The first-ever Cremer-Passy Prize had also been awarded and a competitive process for the adoption of an IPU Anthem had been held. If approved, the new anthem would be instituted at the 147th Assembly.

His activities to heighten the IPU's profile, including through his attendance at events around the world, simultaneously supported the implementation of the IPU Strategy, which had been a further focus of his work, along with that of consolidating the IPU's good governance. As part of the latter, he had, among other activities, participated in meetings of the Executive Committee and, whether in person, virtually or by telephone, worked regularly with the IPU Secretary General and Directors — always as a team, which was a crucial factor in strengthening the IPU and its relevance.

Mr. P. Moatihodi (Botswana) said that he wished to thank and applaud the IPU President, whose mission it was to consult and communicate, for having taken the IPU to the people around the world.

The President said that it was essential for parliamentarians, as representatives of the people, to get out and about to talk directly with the people. He therefore made a point of trying to do just that during all his visits.

Mr. J. Buttimer (Ireland), congratulating the President on his leadership, said that he had demonstrated to parliamentarians the importance of the IPU and ensured that they had a voice. More importantly, he had proactively led the Organization in difficult times and put forward initiatives for making the world a better place and for facilitating the work of parliamentarians. Without his leadership, there would have been no opportunity for attempting to broker engagement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Equally commendable were his initiatives in the area of sustainable development, including in the context of the recent Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations in New York.

The President said that he was grateful for the kind words spoken.

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President said that the Executive Committee had noted with satisfaction the progress achieved by the IPU Communications Division in increasing the IPU's presence on social networks and in raising the visibility of Members during Assemblies. The Executive Committee had also renewed its appeal in favour of the participation of parliamentarians on national delegations to major UN events, as part of the IPU's commitment to mobilizing parliamentary action to address global challenges. Many governments unfortunately failed to grasp that such participation was relevant and vital for parliaments, which would provide essential support in translating international commitments into national realities.

In addition, the Executive Committee had called for awareness-raising efforts, particularly among Speakers of Parliament, on different issues in light of the authoritative contribution that high-level parliamentarians could make to the decision-making process. Lastly, the Executive Committee had expressed its great concern over the denial of education to women in Afghanistan — a violation of human rights that it had condemned. It considered it especially important to create channels for dialogue with the country's authorities with the aim of changing the status quo, including from behind the scenes. The IPU sought no recognition for any part it might play in the achievement of that aim, which was paramount and for which it would continue to fight robustly.

The Governing Council took note of the report of the President.

Item 6 of the agenda

PRESENTATION BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE IPU IMPACT REPORT FOR 2022

The Secretary General, accompanying his remarks with a digital slide presentation and describing the *IPU Impact Report for 2022* as a source of pride for the entire Organization, said that the purpose of the report was to assess the impact of the activities conducted during the first year of implementation of the IPU 2022-2026 Strategy on the areas covered by the IPU's mandate. The report was best considered in conjunction with the President's report on his activities, which complemented the work undertaken by the membership through the IPU Secretariat. As the very pillars of democracy, parliaments were central to the five strategic objectives identified in the IPU Strategy for building parliamentary ecosystems to realize democracy that delivered for everyone. Those objectives were: building effective and empowered parliaments, promoting inclusive and representative parliaments, supporting resilient and innovative parliaments, catalysing collective parliamentary action, and strengthening the IPU's accountability. The four policy areas also identified to test the relevance and impact of each action were climate change; democracy, human rights, gender equality and youth participation; peace and security; and sustainable development for all.

In addition to describing the activities undertaken, full details of which were available on the IPU website, the report highlighted a number of case studies as examples of what had been achieved with the available resources. It showed, for instance, that in the top policy area of climate change, 2022 had been a very busy year for the IPU, and 2023 was set to follow suit by way of the new *Parliaments for the Planet* campaign, designed to amplify parliamentary action on the matter. Emphasis had also been placed on the promotion of human rights, including through the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, which functioned as a unique mechanism empowered to examine and defend cases involving parliamentarians around the world whose rights had been violated. Its workload having regrettably risen by 10% in 2022, the Committee was currently examining some 740 such cases in 44 countries. It had, however, achieved positive progress in resolving many cases, such as in Sri Lanka and Türkiye, where parliamentarians had been released from prison thanks to the Committee's efforts.

Disquieted by the increasing trend of violence against women, especially women in politics, the IPU had previously conducted and rolled out the findings of surveys and other work to assess the magnitude of the problem and identify solutions. In 2022, it had followed up on a study on violence against women in African parliaments, recognizing in that context the contribution of countries such as Benin, Gabon, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and South Africa, to which the Central African Republic could now also be added as the most recent recruit to the campaign against such violence. As it could not be assumed, however, that all parliaments had the capacity to play the same key role in such matters, the IPU was dedicated to providing capacity-building for parliamentarians, including tools for enhancing the skills of women parliamentarians. In its flagship publication, the *Global Parliamentary Report 2022*, the IPU had also identified how parliaments could promote engagement with citizens in order to capture their concerns as input to the legislative process.

With regard to promoting inclusive and representative parliaments, Members were to be congratulated on their efforts as highlighted in the IPU's annual *Women in parliament* report, published together with a map in 2022, which tracked progress in women's representation in politics. For the first time in history, all parliaments included at least one woman member, a fact that should be celebrated but also seen as an opportunity to do better. Efforts were needed to further improve women's representation in parliamentary political parties, which had grown by 0.4 percentage points to 26.5%, representing the slowest increase in six years. At that rate, it would take an estimated 80 years to reach gender parity.

In the area of youth empowerment, the IPU's very vibrant youth movement had continued its robust work in 2022 during the Assemblies and in the context of an empowerment series instituted to train young parliamentarians for public office. Some 1,000 leaders had already signed up to the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign, launched in 2021, which was fast gaining traction and which Members were encouraged to join. Congratulations were due to the Parliament of Zambia on its recent establishment of a youth caucus as part of its efforts to rejuvenate, with IPU support, and to the Parliament of Nigeria, with which the IPU had been working over the years towards ensuring that young people could run for public office and which now had a lively caucus of young parliamentarians as a result.

In 2022, there had been a notable upsurge, following the COVID-19 pandemic, in the use of digital technology to improve the work of parliaments. The IPU had also sought its own digital transformation, with many of the activities mentioned by the President carried out by means of such technology. The same applied to the work of the Secretariat, thanks to the ability of its staff to access documentation remotely. The IPU Centre for Innovation in Parliament had worked hard to promote parliamentary networking and harness new technologies for the benefit of parliaments.

On another note, following a review of the IPU's engagement with the United Nations as part of the strategic objective of catalysing collective parliamentary action in support of global processes, the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs was to be restructured to increase its agility in responding to the IPU's relationship with the United Nations.

In conclusion, he drew attention to the foreword to the report, which provided an important overview of challenges and achievements relating to climate action, parliamentary diplomacy, gender parity, parliamentarians facing increasing danger, and new tools for parliamentarians. Looking ahead in 2023, the main focus would remain on climate action.

The President, thanking the Secretary General for his report, said that it was important to understand the impact of IPU activities around the world. Concerning the rising number of cases before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, while it might appear to indicate a worsening situation, it could also be attributable to the IPU's increased visibility and a new awareness of the Committee's existence and function that prompted the submission of more cases for the Committee to defend. It was worth noting the words of a former Speaker of Parliament — later to become a President of the United Nations General Assembly — to the effect that he had known while a political prisoner in his country that he could rely on the IPU to defend him.

Mr. D.D. Lompo (Burkina Faso) said that he commended the entire staff of the IPU as well as its President and above all the Secretary General on their successful work in bringing parliamentarians together and with such a sense of diplomacy. His country had full confidence in the IPU, to which it conveyed profuse thanks and wished it well in the further pursuit of its activities.

Mr. K.K.P. Kouassi (Côte d'Ivoire), expressing similar thanks, said that the Secretary General's edifying report showed the immense amount of work being put in towards effectively fashioning a better world. He encouraged the IPU to continue in that vein.

The Secretary General said that such positive comments were uplifting for all concerned and that the small IPU Secretariat was proud of being able to count on support from Members for the bulk of its activities — including by representing it in those activities in countries near and far — as part of their commitment to the Organization. The IPU was grateful for the membership's agreement to an increase of 3% in the assessed contributions on which its activities were primarily reliant. It was also grateful for the extrabudgetary contributions received from a host of partners, some of them focused specifically on development, such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Irish Aid and the Canadian Department of Trade and Foreign Affairs, which were providing ongoing support. On a personal note, he wished to thank his Secretariat colleagues for all their work and for their unflinching dedication to the Organization, which he hoped would continue to be deserving of Members' trust.

The President said that the Executive Committee, in congratulating the Secretary General on his impressive report, had urged him to continue working in the same spirit and always with the goal of further improvement in mind. It had also recommended that he should establish a user-friendly database of good legislative practices for Members to consult, as required, and that he should strengthen the evaluation and monitoring mechanism for the activities implemented to consolidate the IPU Strategy.

The Governing Council took note of the IPU Impact Report for 2022.

Launch of the IPU climate campaign *Parliaments for the Planet*

The President, introducing the new IPU climate campaign, said that climate change was a reality with consequences already well known to all. Parliaments had a role to play in alleviating that situation by using their powers to set climate-friendly policies, allocate proper budgetary funding for their implementation, and hold governments to account on their commitments under the Paris Agreement. For its part, the IPU had decided to act on climate change without further delay,

adopting in 2022 the Nusa Dua Declaration on mobilizing parliaments to that end and addressing the issue at the COP27 UN Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, which it would continue at COP28 in the United Arab Emirates.

The Secretary General, elaborating on the campaign, said that much had been said about the climate change situation but that action to implement known solutions to the evident climate emergency, described by some as climate chaos, was the vital key to progress. Such action could be adapted as necessary along the way and must start with parliaments, which were empowered to effect change by making the legislative policies and resource allocations needed to save the planet while also ensuring that governments complied with the Paris Agreement. The *Parliaments for the Planet* campaign was aimed at spurring parliaments into action by encouraging them, among other things, to reduce their carbon footprint and become greener as an example to others and by building their capacity for delivering on climate action. The campaign was therefore two-pronged and called for strong political support and commitment. With climate change as the membership's stated first priority for 2023, it was considered expedient to launch the campaign during the same year so as to bring focus to what parliaments should be doing to save the planet. All Members were encouraged to sign up to the campaign.

A video entitled "My parliament, my planet!" was screened.

The President urged Members to involve themselves in the campaign for the sake of a safer planet for their children and grandchildren.

Item 8 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS (CL/211/8-P.1)

The Secretary General, drawing attention to the list of future inter-parliamentary meetings set out in document CL/211/8-P.1, said that, in the period following the Governing Council's decision that the 147th Assembly would take place in Geneva, the Executive Committee had received an offer from the Parliament of Angola to host that Assembly in Luanda from 23 to 27 October 2023. After examining the offer, the Executive Committee had invited the Secretariat to send a mission to Angola, which had confirmed that, despite a number of challenges, the technical facilities needed to host an Assembly were in place. The Executive Committee had therefore decided to recommend to the Governing Council that the 147th Assembly should instead take place in Luanda on the proposed dates, in which case the IPU would sign a host agreement with the Parliament of Angola.

Concerning the specialized and other meetings also listed in the document, the necessary resources had been mobilized for those not already approved and the IPU was working with potential hosts to ensure that they took place. In line with the IPU's digital transformation policy, many of those meetings were being organized virtually or in hybrid mode as part of the Organization's increasing focus on diversifying access to its activities.

Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) said that the proposed dates for the 148th Assembly in Geneva in March 2024 should be reconsidered, as they coincided with Ramadan, which would make it difficult for Muslims to participate.

The President said that the IPU would take that factor into consideration and seek to ascertain whether the venue for the 148th Assembly was available on alternative dates. On that understanding, he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the future inter-parliamentary meetings listed in document CL/211/8-P.1, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Announcement of the quorum for the session

The Secretary General announced that, in conformity with Rule 34.2 of the Rules of the Governing Council, a quorum of 72 had been established for the current session on the basis of the number of members or substitutes participating in the first meeting, which amounted to 142.

The sitting rose at 11:30.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 15 March 2023
(Morning)

The sitting was called to order at 09:50, with Mr. D. Pacheco, President of the IPU, in the Chair.

Item 7 of the agenda

FINANCIAL SITUATION (CL/211/7-R.1)

Ms. J. Alm Ericson (Sweden), member of the Executive Committee and Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance, outlining the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2023 as set out in document CL/211/7-R.1, said that the IPU's finances were regularly monitored by the Sub-Committee and were currently healthy and stable. Although 2022 had been a negative year for global investment markets, the IPU's prudent investment strategy was providing positive long-term returns. With regard to assessed contributions, the majority of Members had paid their dues in full and on time, with payments steadily continuing to arrive in 2023. As the table in Annex II of the document showed, however, too many were in arrears, which called for follow-up through the geopolitical groups with the Members concerned. New members of any IPU committee or body were also called upon to help to the extent possible in mobilizing voluntary funds for the benefit of the committee or body concerned. Lastly, given that the current Assembly was taking place slightly earlier than would usually be the case, the Executive Committee had recommended that the review and approval of the audited financial statements for 2022 should be deferred until the 147th Assembly in Angola.

The President, while welcoming the good news concerning the IPU's healthy financial situation, said that he joined Ms. Ericson in urging all Members to pay their contributions, without which it would be impossible for the IPU to pursue the ever-growing number of activities it was being requested to carry out.

The Secretary General, complementing the information already outlined, said that the external auditors were in the process of finalizing their reports for presentation at the 147th Assembly and that the table mentioned was an updated version from which some Members — Libya, for instance — had been removed following the recent payment of their contributions. Concerning voluntary funding, which currently represented 27% of the IPU budget, it remained at a level that ensured no exertion of outside influence on the Organization. A case could be made nonetheless for an increase in such funding, taking into consideration the IPU's expanded mandate in the light of its new strategy. He therefore appealed to persons of goodwill to mobilize more financial and other resources in favour of the Organization in the same way as various partners did as part of a long-term engagement for which it was extremely grateful. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, for example, had over many years been a steadfast supporter of the IPU, and the current agreement worth CHF 3.8 million would run until December 2024. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development was also supporting the IPU's work in the area of gender equality to the tune of CHF 1.4 million over three years. Irish Aid regularly supported that same work, currently via a programme worth CHF 148,000. In addition, the IPU received a grant of CHF 330,000 from the World Health Organization for health-related activities and a contribution of almost CHF 100,000 from the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health for promoting the health of women, newborns, children and adolescents.

The IPU's activities to further the parliamentary contribution to the global campaign against terrorism and violent extremism received much-appreciated support in both words and action from a consortium of funders, specifically: China, providing CHF 1 million; Bangladesh, providing CHF 200,000; Benin, providing CHF 15,000; the Arab Parliament, providing CHF 60,000; and the United Arab Emirates, providing US\$ 0.5 million. China was additionally a long-standing supporter of the IPU's work relating to the Sustainable Development Goals, currently to the tune of US\$ 1.5 million. Smaller and less well-resourced partners likewise made a financial effort to support the IPU, thereby testifying to their belief in its relevance. One such partner was the

Federated States of Micronesia, which for the second time in succession had provided resources amounting to CHF 120,000 towards climate change governance activities. The European Union was sponsoring a large and impactful IPU project in Djibouti, where the IPU had been working for a number of years to great success. The IPU also received funding from UN partners, including the UN Development Programme, for the provision of in-country support.

The IPU was equally grateful for help received from parliaments for scaling up its human resource capacity and thereby enhancing its performance in discharging its mandate. For almost a decade, the Parliament of the Republic of Korea had been seconding senior members of its staff to work with the IPU for a two-year period during which they provided expertise while also learning about how international organizations functioned. On returning home, some had gone on to occupy very senior positions in the diplomatic sphere as well as in parliament. The Austrian Parliament had also seconded a senior staff member at ambassadorial level to head the Office of the IPU Permanent Observer to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna, which had enabled the IPU to branch out to a major UN hub. Lastly, the IPU was greatly appreciative of a new partner, the Julie Ann Wrigley Foundation, which was providing increasing amounts of resources to the IPU, initially for the development of gender equality programmes and, more recently, around US\$ 100,000 to bolster the *My parliament, my planet!* campaign.

Clearly, therefore, the IPU had a broad base of donors, meaning that its way of business could not be influenced and indicating the IPU's continuing relevance to its Members and also to its partners — all of which believed in the ability of parliaments to effect change. Parliaments must continue their resolve to show impact through their activities so that the IPU could retain the confidence of donors from around the world.

The President expressed thanks to all donors for their generosity in contributing towards the IPU's implementation of its activities.

Mr. N. Manzoor (Guyana), noting that his country's name was listed among those with unpaid contributions at 11 March 2023, said that he had provided documentation evidencing that the Guyanese Parliament had, in February 2022, paid the relatively small amount shown in the related table. Concerned to ensure that there would be no similar occurrence, in the case of larger amounts especially, he requested the Secretariat to keep careful track of all payments of contributions, whether small or large, into its bank account.

The President said that the Secretariat would indeed look into the matter to ascertain what had occurred and ensure such an incident was not repeated in future. It was worth noting, however, that payment sources were not always easily identifiable unless clearly indicated.

The Secretary General confirmed that his colleagues would meet with the Speaker of Guyana to clarify the situation and eliminate any misunderstanding.

The Governing Council took note of the information provided on the financial situation of the IPU.

Item 9 of the agenda

SITUATION OF CERTAIN PARLIAMENTS

The Secretary General, accompanying with a digital slide presentation his overview of situation of certain parliaments as discussed at length by the Executive Committee, said that the IPU was monitoring the situation of parliaments in countries where their functioning was affected by political developments. Among the particular flash points was Afghanistan, which had had no functioning parliament since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Many Afghan parliamentarians were in exile and some had unfortunately been killed, among them the valiant Ms. Mursal Nabizada, who had opted to remain in Afghanistan and in whose memory the IPU had observed a minute of silence. In line with previous decisions of the Governing Council, an Afghan delegation headed by the previously elected Speaker of the House of the People continued to participate in IPU proceedings, as at the present Assembly, in a non-voting observer capacity. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should maintain that position in solidarity with colleagues who were under siege in Afghanistan.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said with respect to Haiti, the scene of much political turmoil and violence, that the country's parliament had gradually fallen into oblivion, as no elections had taken place and the term of the last standing parliamentarians in both houses had recently expired. Parliament therefore remained unpopulated while continuing to exist, although elections in 2023 were currently anticipated. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should continue to monitor the situation while also urging the Haitian authorities to organize the promised elections in the hope of welcoming a fully fledged Haitian parliament into the IPU, possibly as soon as in October 2023 in Angola.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that, in Myanmar, the situation was akin to that in Afghanistan. Following their takeover of the country in February 2021, the military rulers had altogether subverted the democratic process and refused to allow the democratically elected parliament to sit. The Myanmar people had responded by forming, through that parliament, a body known as the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) to articulate their views. The current military government was not recognized by the United Nations and, for its part, the Governing Council had taken the principled position not to endorse undemocratic processes and to express solidarity with the Myanmar people, including by supporting the CRPH. Also recognizing, however, that the CRPH was not in a position to function on the territory of a sovereign State, the Organization had previously agreed to allow it to participate in IPU deliberations in a non-voting observer capacity. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to maintain that position.

The President, recalling the execution of a former Myanmar parliamentarian in July 2022, said that such actions must always be strongly condemned.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Türkiye) said that, in the fight for democracy in Myanmar, it was also important to remember the Rohingya people, who were being ethnically cleansed from the country. She hoped that the restoration of democracy in Myanmar would also bring an end to the Rohingya massacres.

The President agreed that the rights of the Rohingya people, who were among the IPU's concerns over Myanmar, must always be defended.

Mr. S.S. Al Barkani (Yemen), endorsing those comments and emphasizing that saving human lives was no less important than saving democracy, said that the IPU must uphold human rights and stand firm against the murderous criminals responsible for the genocide of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, including by calling for an end to their bloodshed.

The President said that, from the very outset and even before the military coup, the IPU had strongly condemned the treatment of the Rohingya in Myanmar as a human rights violation. It nonetheless also sought to keep open the channels of dialogue with the Myanmar authorities in the hope of fostering the fastest possible return to constitutional order in Myanmar.

Mr. H. Jürgensen (Chile) said that, in deploring the collapse of democracy in situations where it had been undermined and parliaments were no longer functioning, parliamentarians should also question themselves in cases where their parliaments had taken actions to undermine the rule of law. The IPU must support causes where due and likewise, condemn parliaments where due.

The President said that, generally speaking, parliamentarians should set the example to society by also criticizing those within their own ranks who engaged in hate speech. Moreover, they should refer all cases of physical or other attacks on colleagues to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians for analysis and investigation.

The Secretary General said by way of information that the plight of the Rohingya was constantly under review by the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the Executive Committee's recommendation concerning the situation in Myanmar.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, referring to the situation in Sudan, said that the former Sudanese Parliament had been dissolved and subsequently suspended from the IPU membership following the military coup in April 2019, since when instability had continued to reign throughout the country. Elections had not taken place as foreseen but were now understood to be on the horizon following the signing of a political framework agreement in December 2022. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should take note of the situation and express its strong desire to see those elections take place at the earliest opportunity, in accordance with the schedule agreed by the country's political leaders, so that a fully fledged Sudanese parliament could be welcomed back into the IPU membership.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, turning to the situation in countries with transitional parliaments in place, starting with Burkina Faso, said that the two coups experienced in that country since 2022 had each stemmed from dissatisfaction with the leadership in place. At the same time as adopting the principled position of refusing to condone military takeovers of any kind, the Governing Council had taken note of the establishment of a transitional legislative body by the military authorities in Burkina Faso. In light of the expansion of that body in its current second iteration, the Governing Council had also decided that a return to constitutional rule would be accelerated if Burkina Faso retained its IPU membership and the military authorities were encouraged to develop a road map to that end, including with IPU support.

Since the 210th session in October 2022, he had been in contact with those authorities, including the Transitional Legislative Assembly. More recently, the Speaker had visited Geneva, at his invitation, and reconfirmed the commitment to work with the IPU at the current Assembly with a view to restoring normalcy to the country, a commitment reiterated by the Burkinabé delegation during the previous day's meeting of the Executive Committee. Furthermore, a road map was now in place for helping the Transitional Legislative Assembly to craft a legislative framework providing a firmer legal basis for the new Burkina Faso. Against that backdrop, the Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Burkinabé Assembly's membership of the IPU should be allowed to continue; that it should be urged to scale up progress in the implementation of the road map, with completion due to coincide with the end of the transitional period in July 2024; and that the Governing Council should at that time express its strong desire to welcome a fully fledged and democratically elected parliament in Burkina Faso.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that the situation was similar in Chad, where the country's Transitional National Council had been in place since October 2021 following the death of the then Chadian President. With the transitional period set to end in October 2024, that Council was understood to be working with various authorities, including the commission in charge of drafting a new Chadian constitution, towards the organization of elections by that date. As previously

decided, the IPU was providing technical support to the Council's staff in preparation for the advent of a fully fledged legislative body. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should take note of those developments and that the IPU should continue its support while expressing its strong desire to see the processes under way accelerated towards the organization of such elections.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that, in the case of Guinea, parliament had been dissolved in September 2021 and a transitional legislative body was put in place in January 2022. The Governing Council had condemned military takeovers and the subversion of democratically elected institutions, as in other instances, but it had also taken note of the efforts to re-establish constitutional rule in the country. According to information provided by the Guinean authorities, the transitional period had been reduced from 36 to 24 months following consultations with regional integration bodies, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In the same spirit of constructive engagement as with Burkina Faso and Chad, the Governing Council had decided that the Guinean membership of the IPU should remain, and that a road map — since agreed upon — should be pursued in support of the country's speedy return to constitutional rule. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation and support the transitional parliament in the implementation of that road map.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said with respect to Libya that, despite its close monitoring of the situation, the IPU had found it difficult to grasp the chain of events. At one point, there had been multiple parallel institutions, including two parliaments, only one of which had been recognized by the Governing Council — specifically, the House of Representatives, elected in 2014 and now sitting in Benghazi and not, as formerly, in Tobruk. Having recently paid its contributions in full, the House was entitled to exercise all IPU membership rights. The IPU understood that parliamentary and presidential elections were expected by November 2023. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to engage with the Libyan parliamentary authorities and express the strong hope that those elections would take place as foreseen so that the IPU could welcome a fully fledged parliament that was representative of the Libyan people.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

Mr. F. Salim (Libya), wishing to provide clarifications, said that his country was a newcomer to free democracy and its political situation was fragile for reasons relating to the institutions of State, of which parliament was one. Outside interference in Libya's internal affairs was an added factor, with the UN Support Mission in Libya established in 2011 also sharing in the responsibility, as it had failed to provide Libyans with necessary assistance and support while also misrepresenting the situation in its briefings, with adverse consequences for the work of parliament. The Libyan crisis was therefore down to a combination of domestic issues and international actions. The Libyan Parliament was in dire need of IPU capacity-building support and assistance and also looked for guidance to the UN Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Libya. The country's situation remained tenuous; the anticipated reconciliation had not taken place and parliamentarians were being threatened and kidnapped, sometimes at gunpoint. Such events were not always met with condemnation, which had direct implications for the free practice of democracy. The Libyan Parliament was keen to play its full role and counted on the IPU for support to that end.

The President said that the Libyan authorities could be assured of IPU assistance for the development of a democratic and constitutional Libyan parliament.

The Secretary General said in welcoming the Libyan delegation to the IPU that he looked forward to continuing engagement and to open discussions, which were currently ongoing with the Benghazi-based House of Representatives with a view to providing the technical support required in the post-election phase to get a fully fledged parliament off the ground. The support previously agreed in 2013 had never materialized, owing to the prevailing situation of insecurity in the country and the resulting inability to secure guarantees for the integrity of IPU personnel. As to threats, kidnappings, or any other form of abuse to which parliamentarians were subjected, they should be referred for investigation to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, which was already examining a prominent case in Libya. The IPU could then exert pressure on the authorities concerned to provide clarification and bring the culprits to book.

Returning to his overview, another country where the situation mirrored that in Burkina Faso was Mali, where a military coup had taken place in 2020. Although it had recognized the Transitional National Council since created as the IPU Member for Mali, the Governing Council had also expressed its strong desire to see the process of return to constitutional rule accelerated, including with the help of IPU support. The IPU now wished to scale up its existing work with the Malian authorities to facilitate their access to citizens so as to explain the political processes under way and obtain their buy-in. Having taken note of those developments, the Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to recognize and provide technical assistance to the country's Transitional National Council, while also expressing its wish to see the speedy implementation of the road map established with ECOWAS' support for a return to constitutional rule.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that, in the case of South Sudan, positive progress had been achieved with the resolution of disagreements among political stakeholders, as a result of which an expanded transitional parliament was now functioning. A new constitution was being drafted for completion by the end of February 2024 and the transitional period was set to end in February 2025, described as a firm deadline, all of which boded well for a swift return to constitutional rule. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should take note of, and indeed salute, those promising developments and encourage the country's political authorities to continue to display the requisite goodwill for driving the transitional process to its logical conclusion with elections by February 2024.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said in respect of Guinea-Bissau that the country was in ongoing political turmoil as it lurched from crisis to crisis. Parliament had been dissolved in advance of elections scheduled to take place in December 2022 but since postponed until June 2023. The IPU continued to monitor the situation and had, on several occasions, offered assistance to the point of setting aside resources for supporting the process of resolving the political impasse but had received no feedback. Having taken note of that worrying situation, the Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should send a strong message impressing upon the country's authorities the need to ensure that the elections foreseen in June 2023 took place so that a fully fledged parliament could be welcomed into the IPU at the 147th Assembly in Angola.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that, in Palestine, the first parliamentary elections to be scheduled since 2016 had not taken place as planned in December 2022 owing to obstacles raised by various stakeholders in the region. The Palestinian Legislative Council had been dissolved in 2018 in anticipation of those elections, which had been postponed along with presidential elections, with no new dates envisaged. Meanwhile, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians remained seized of a number of cases involving Palestinian parliamentarians. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Palestinian authorities should be urged to organize elections for putting in place a fully fledged parliament as soon as possible.

Mr. A. Faysal (Palestine) said that his delegation's remarks at the 145th Assembly in Kigali had clearly not been taken into account. At that time, the delegation had stated that Palestinian elections had been obstructed by a last-minute Israeli refusal to allow them to take place in Jerusalem, despite the efforts of the European Union in particular to ensure that the guarantees provided in that respect were honoured. Palestinian President Abbas had called for elections in 2022 and specified a date, but no elections would ever be possible if Jerusalem continued to be excluded from the exercise. The IPU should therefore urge Israel not to interfere in Palestinian internal affairs and to allow elections to take place in Jerusalem.

The President said that the IPU was aware of the situation as it stood and would continue to work with the authorities of both countries towards ensuring that free elections were conducted throughout the whole of Palestine as soon as possible. He took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the Executive Committee's recommendation on the matter.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that Tunisia was another country in political turmoil, especially since July 2021, when its President had suspended parliament, only to later dissolve it entirely, and gone on to arrogate to himself powers to move ahead with the country's development, including through institutional reform. Under the new Tunisian Constitution, proclaimed in July 2022 as part of that reform, extensive powers were vested in the country's President and provision made for two houses of parliament. With a reported turnout out of between 11% and 19% in the two rounds of elections that had subsequently taken place, in December 2022 and January 2023, many of the President's opponents, among them members of the dissolved parliament, had been clamouring for non-recognition of the results — only very recently confirmed— on the grounds of illegitimacy. The Governing Council had previously expressed displeasure at the fact that the Tunisian Parliament was being prevented from performing its proper duty and had also subsequently condemned its dissolution while at the same time taking note of developments and urging a speedy return to constitutional rule, including with IPU support. In response, the Tunisian President had stated that such support would be welcome once the parliamentary elections had run their full course.

Since the 145th Assembly in Kigali, he had engaged with the Tunisian authorities, including the Head of State, the Tunisian ambassador in Geneva and the Tunisian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and received confirmation that IPU support would be welcome with a view to improving the country's stability and promoting more stringent parliamentary efforts to further its governance process. In that context, the authorities had suggested that he should invite a delegation from the newly elected parliament to Geneva so as to agree on a road map for resolving, with IPU help, the issues at stake. He had concurred with the suggestion, considering it to chime with the approach adopted by the Governing Council towards engagement with the Tunisian authorities. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that arrangements for the suggested visit should be pursued in the coming weeks.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said, in connection with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, that he simply wished to confirm the previous decision taken by the Governing Council not to recognize either of the country's two competing parliaments, as the mandate of the legislature elected in 2015 had expired and the legislature of 2022 had not been duly elected in compliance with the

applicable rules. In accordance with that same decision, a joint delegation comprised of members of both parliaments nonetheless continued to be welcome to attend IPU Assemblies, including the present Assembly, in an observer capacity. In short, the position with regard to Venezuela had not changed.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of that information.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, concluding his presentation with the situation in Yemen, said that the country remained on the IPU radar screen and that a fully fledged delegation was attending the current Assembly. The only new fact to report was that the IPU, in the form of the Executive Committee and now the Governing Council, continued to urge the international community to step up its efforts to resolve the ongoing crisis in Yemen. It also continued to recognize as representatives of Yemen all Yemeni parliamentarians elected in 2003, since when no further elections had taken place. As to the country's ongoing humanitarian crisis, it would be examined by the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should take note of those developments and encourage the Yemeni delegation to continue to engage with and federate all parliamentarians in Yemen, with a view to articulating the interests of Yemeni society at large.

Mr. S.S. Al Barkani (Yemen), expressing deepest gratitude and appreciation to the IPU, said that his country had been in a state of war for over eight years, but drew hope from the Organization, with which the Yemeni Parliament had signed a technical support agreement some four months previously. Yemen looked to the United Nations to save it from further bloodshed and its parliamentarians would cooperate above all to rescue their 44 colleagues who had been sentenced to death at the hands of Houthi rebels. The IPU's commendable efforts in that and all other related spheres would hopefully continue, along with its steadfast solidarity with Yemen, until the country was fully liberated from Houthi control.

The President, observing that the war would one day end if the work needed was put in, said that the IPU always endeavoured, as in the case of Yemen, to be on the right side of history. He took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the Executive Committee's recommendation on the matter.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that his presentation had covered all of the situations reviewed by the Executive Committee during its current session and that some of the information provided was intended as an early warning of political situations that might subsequently erupt into a full-blown crisis. In that event, the matter would be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee and the Governing Council.

The President, thanking the Secretary General and his staff for their efforts to defend democracy around the world, said that, in line with the principle of solidarity, he encouraged all Members to do whatever possible on their part to help countries in crisis to resolve their situations and effect a return to normalcy and constitutional order.

Item 10 of the agenda

REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE IPU (CL/211/10-P.1)

The President, recalling the decision taken at the 145th Assembly in Kigali to open regional offices in Cairo and Montevideo and approve the related conditions, said that the Secretary General had undertaken consultations with the Parliaments of Egypt and Uruguay to ascertain their acceptance of those conditions as a prerequisite for proceeding further.

The Secretary General said in addition that, if opened on that basis, the regional offices would operate as a two-year pilot, followed by an evaluation as to whether the concept had merit. His consultations with the two parliaments were progressing, although not as fast as he had hoped, as some of the conditions to be met by the respective authorities needed clarification. Acceptance of the conditions would lead to an agreement, pursuant to which the Egyptian or Uruguayan Government, as the case may be, would recognize the IPU as an international organization entitled to all the related immunities and privileges required for it to function freely and independently without interference. Thereafter, an agreement would also be signed with the parliament concerned for it to provide the resources needed for the regional office to function.

The Executive Committee had taken note of the progress made, which it was keen to accelerate. It therefore recommended that the Governing Council, after taking similar note, should authorize him to work for a satisfactory conclusion of the consultations and, in that event, conclude the relevant agreements without further reference to the Council. Such a procedure was in line with his prerogatives as IPU Secretary General, which gave him authority over the administrative structures of the IPU, including any regional offices that might be established, and he was minded to ensure that they functioned in compliance with the administrative norms of international organizations.

Ms. T. Ackson (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the concerns registered by the Group in Kigali still stood, as it had not since been consulted, as promised at that time, on the matter. While part of the Arab Group, Egypt was geographically located in Africa and was therefore a fellow African nation and also an African Union member. As such, the African Group had no issues with Egypt but questioned which Members would be served by a regional office in Cairo and had been surprised to hear that a decision on which it should have been consulted had been taken in Kigali.

Mr. S.S. Al Barkani (Yemen), expressing appreciation for the efforts made in connection with the two regional offices, said that the process would hopefully be speeded up so that the offices could be opened sooner rather than later. With its long tradition of democracy, Egypt was well qualified for the task of providing important services to Members in the Arab world, in addition to some in Africa and Asia. Approval of the Executive Committee's recommendation would enable the Secretary General to complete his negotiations without further ado and proceed with the steps needed thereafter to ensure that the offices were opened as quickly as possible for the benefit of all. In serving as a conduit for direct and regular communication with parliaments in the respective regions, those offices would help the IPU to discharge its mandate to the fullest extent, including through the provision of more technical support and training opportunities to the parliaments concerned.

The Secretary General said in the interest of clarity that, in Kigali, the Governing Council had decided in principle to open offices in Egypt and Uruguay, provided that the conditions annexed to the guiding document circulated and approved on that same occasion were fully met. That guiding document had formed the basis for the consultations carried out as mandated by the Council. Also in Kigali, however, concerns had been raised as to whether a regional office sited in Cairo was intended to serve African or Arab countries. As stated in the approved conditions, the establishment of a regional office depended on the support of a geopolitical group, which in the case of Egypt had come from the Arab Group, and it was correct to say that the concerns raised were to be factored into the consultations under way. With a view to a speedy conclusion of those consultations, the IPU had strongly encouraged the sponsors of the proposed office in Cairo to work with the African Group coordinator to resolve any remaining misunderstanding. His pursuit of consultations was furthermore based on the endorsement of the Arab Group, which was a legal requirement. The concerns raised were nonetheless legitimate and would no doubt be taken into consideration by the Egyptian authorities as the consultations continued.

Ms. T. Ackson (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the African Group, asked for clarity as to who would be responsible for consulting the Group.

Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) said that the Secretary General appeared to be stating that the proposed office in Cairo was intended to serve the Arab Group countries, which was a misrepresentation. Having conversed with the Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament and listened carefully to the contribution by the Yemeni Speaker, his understanding was that the office, given its

location in Africa, would provide services to Africa and its regional parliaments and that those services could be extended to the Arab League, which was not a problem. It was nonetheless wrong for the Secretary General to insinuate that the office would be an office for the Arab League. First of all, it entailed a misinterpretation of the term “geopolitical group”. Viewing Egypt as a sister republic that had contributed enormously to the liberation of many countries on the continent, Africa also had great respect for Egypt as the cradle of African civilization and for its role in decolonization. Such a strong historical and political relationship equally appreciated by Egypt could not suddenly be divested. Africa’s qualms were not about the opening of an office in Cairo that would also service the Arab League but about the insinuation made.

The President said in response that there was no need for arguments voiced in Kigali to be repeated ad infinitum; he and the Secretary General fully understood the feeling among many colleagues from Africa, as did the Egyptian authorities. In the course of its negotiations with the latter, the IPU would seek to resolve the concerns of the African Group through dialogue, failing which, no agreement on any regional office would be signed.

Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), speaking on a point of order, said that the matter was not a question of repeating arguments but rather of disabusing the notion that the regional office in Egypt would be for the Arab League. That apart, there was no need for further debate.

Mr. K. Murungi (Kenya), also speaking on a point of order, said that it was always important to specify, when introducing the Tanzanian Speaker in the current discussion, that she was representing the African Group.

The President, while noting that it was not known in advance in what capacity a person might speak, said that the comment was appreciated.

Ms. N.N. Mapisa Nqakula (South Africa) said it was regrettable that the discussion had been prolonged owing to the response to the remarks made on behalf of the African Group. It should be acknowledged that the Executive Committee’s recommendation, as presented for a decision, omitted any mention of consultation with the Group — an error for which the IPU must take responsibility. As already stated, the African Group had nothing against Egypt, with which most African countries notably had historical relations. While Egypt might garner support on the strength of its ability to offer features that others could not, the IPU should not be giving the impression that it was imposing a decision on the Egyptian authorities and, by extension, on the African continent. The establishment of regional offices on a pilot basis had been agreed upon in principle. The African Group nonetheless required an assurance that such an office in Cairo would serve the African continent in which Egypt was located as well as the Arab League of which Egypt was a member. Instead of consulting with the potential host authorities, the Secretary General should be consulting with the respective geopolitical groups as a prerequisite to signing any agreement. In short, the emphasis must be focused on the necessary consultative processes. Lastly, it was important to strive for understanding, as opposed to using questionable language or patronizing those who raised issues in a forum that was, by its very nature, consultative.

Mr. H. Gibaly (Egypt) said that substantial information had been provided and relevant documents cited as indicative of the decision taken in Kigali. Subsequent to that decision and in response to queries from a number of countries, Egypt had hosted Mr. Mudenda in Cairo and explained that the Arab Group — not the Arab League, which was not an IPU Member, was entirely distinct from the Arab Group and should not feature in the present discussion — had favoured the establishment of a regional office in Cairo. It had also expressly stated that such an office would serve the entire surrounding area, including countries in Africa and Asia, without exception. Egypt had strong ties of friendship with its fellow African States, to which the office would gladly and freely deliver its services, without negotiation. Egypt was proud to consider Africa as its mother.

The President said that, as he understood it, no regional office would be opened unless agreed by all members of the geopolitical group concerned.

Mr. A. Touizi (Morocco) said that no further discussion was needed, as it had already been decided in principle to open regional offices in Egypt and Uruguay as a pilot to determine whether further offices should be opened elsewhere. A country like his own that was both Arab and African,

Egypt played a pivotal role in the Arab and African domains. The issue was not related to the establishment of an office in Cairo, however, but to the consultation process, which had not been well explained and which should furthermore be concluded as soon as possible on the basis that the office would serve both the Arab and African Groups. Another issue was the stated connection between that office and the Arab League, which had nothing to do with the matter; Egypt's request to host the office had been submitted via the Arab Group.

The Secretary General said that at no time in the present discussion had he mentioned the Arab League; he had referred only to the official Arab geopolitical entity within the IPU, which was the Arab Group. The Governing Council was being requested to give him the responsibility to conclude agreements once the conditions specified in the document approved in Kigali had been met. One of those conditions was that any regional office must be established with the concurrence of a geopolitical group. He recalled having pointed out that the proposal to establish a regional office in Egypt had been sponsored by the Arab Group and also recalled that, during the related discussions in Kigali, expressions of concern had been made.

In the light of the current discussion, his understanding now was that the proposed regional office in Cairo should benefit Arab and African countries alike. If that was indeed the case, he would proceed accordingly and consult among all sides. His concern was to ascertain that the conclusion of an agreement on the proposed regional office was not conditional on agreements between the African and Arab Groups, which was not a criterion identified in the approved document. As it was necessary to protect not only the IPU, but also himself when taking on a responsibility, he needed to ensure that he was equipped to implement the responsibility concerned in accordance with the spirit and letter of the law and in a manner satisfactory to the broader IPU membership. He could help to facilitate consultations, if authorized to do so by the membership, and would not take it upon himself to secure any agreements that were inconsistent with the views expressed within the Governing Council.

Mr. S.S. Al Barkani (Yemen) said that the IPU, not the Egyptian State, would own and control the regional office in Cairo, which would serve its fellow Arab and African countries alike as a matter of course, without question and hence without the need for any agreement. He called on Gulf Arab countries to commit funding to support Egypt in its role as the host country. Lastly, he apologized if his earlier words had created any misunderstanding.

Ms. L. Quartapelle (Italy) said that, in seeking to clarify his mandate, the Secretary General had asked whether the agreement of the two regional groupings concerned was a prerequisite for him to proceed further with consultations on the matter. As far as her delegation was concerned, the answer was yes. It was an important question for all, as it would set the precedent for the possible opening of other regional offices in future.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to mandate the Secretary General to proceed with his consultations on that basis.

It was so decided.

Item 11 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (CL/211/11-P.1)

The President drew attention to a note on proposed new modalities and methods of work for the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, as set out in document CL/211/11-P.1.

The Secretary General, recalling the process described in the note that had resulted in the proposals now before the Governing Council for information, said that the Executive Committee had examined and unanimously endorsed those proposals, which formed part of the road map for the IPU political project at the United Nations. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should take note of progress in the implementation of that road map and take note in addition of the proposed new modalities and methods of work for the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that recommendation.

It was so decided.

Item 12 of the agenda

**REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE IPU TASK FORCE ON
THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE**
(CL/211/12-R.1)

The President, noting that participation in efforts to end conflict and save lives was in the characteristic spirit of the IPU, said that he was grateful to all members of the IPU Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine for their commitment and persistent hard work towards that goal.

Ms. N.N. Mapisa Ngakula (South Africa), member of the Task Force, delivered the report on its work as contained in document CL/211/12-R.1. In the course of 2022, the Task Force had held six online sessions and undertaken a first mission to Kyiv and Moscow in July 2022. In Kigali in October 2022, the Task Force had held hearings with the delegations from both the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Both parliaments had welcomed the efforts of the Task Force in opening channels of communication and underscored their willingness to engage in consultations.

In December 2022, the Task Force had issued a call urging the two parliaments to do everything within their powers to bring about a ceasefire, especially in the winter months, and avoid a humanitarian catastrophe. It also invited the parliaments to continue discussions in person at IPU Headquarters in Geneva. Neither of those proposals had come to fruition, with both delegations expressing reservations about the difficulties they would face in travelling to Geneva.

On 13 March 2023, the Task Force had met during the Assembly in Manama and had acknowledged that the situation on the ground and current geopolitics did not grant the necessary circumstances for a ceasefire to be implemented, nor for both parties to be brought to the same table. In separate hearings with the two delegations, the Task Force had therefore proposed that future engagement should focus on four specific topics: nuclear safety, food security, protection of environmentally vulnerable sites, and access to and exchange of prisoners of war. The delegation of Ukraine had noted that the topics were in line with the Zelensky Peace Plan and the delegation of the Russian Federation had noted that they were in line with the peace proposal recently made by China.

The two delegations had reiterated their support for the work of the Task Force and the unique strength of the IPU as one of the few remaining forums in which both countries were still represented. The delegation of Ukraine had underscored that the Russian Parliament's ratification of the illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory hindered possibilities of a trilateral meeting. The delegation of the Russian Federation had proposed a further mission by the Task Force to war-affected areas but the Task Force had deemed such a visit outside of its mandate.

In terms of next steps, the Task Force would seek to pursue avenues to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of the war in the abovementioned four areas, seek to engage with other parties that could help bring about positive change in the context of the ongoing escalation of the conflict, and endeavour to find possible avenues of convergence, allowing the two delegations to eventually convene in a suitable venue for continued discussions.

Mr. O. Merezko (Ukraine) said that the report contained several mentions of ceasefire but omitted to include any reference to the crucial decision taken by the International Court of Justice, in March 2022, to order provisional measures against the Russian Federation, including immediate suspension of the military operations commenced in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Nor was there any mention of the Russian reaction to that decision. The tone of the report, moreover, was likely to give a false impression, as it failed to convey which party was the aggressor and which was the victim of aggression as defined under international law. Even the words "war in Ukraine" in the title of the report could be misconstrued as a reference to an internal conflict, rather than to a great war of aggression perpetrated by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The truth must be told about such critical issues.

Ms. N.N. Mapisa Nqakula (South Africa), member of the Task Force, said that it was important for the Task Force to maintain its impartiality in conducting its business and in reporting to the Governing Council and other IPU bodies.

The Secretary General said that, as it continued its deliberations, the Task Force would be certain to look into the information provided about the decision of the International Court of Justice. As to the title of the report or, more precisely, the title of the Task Force, it was an official title chosen by the IPU membership, pursuant to its 2022 emergency item resolution, and not by the Task Force itself. The point made about the distinction between aggressor and aggressee was well taken, although it was clear to all from the IPU's earlier deliberations on the war — and indeed a matter of record — that it was known which was which.

The Governing Council took note of the report on the work of the IPU Task Force.

Ms. A.D. Mergane Kanouté (Senegal), Vice-President of the IPU, took the Chair.

Item 14 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(CL/211/14-P.1)

(c) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

(CL/211/14(c)-R.1 and R.2)

Mr. S. Cogolati (President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), presenting the Committee's report as contained in document CL/211/14(c)-R.2, said that the Committee, during its session in Manama, had held 11 hearings, during which it had met with authorities as well as complainants. He thanked all of those who had taken the time to respond to the Committee's invitation and attend its session by videoconference and in person in Bahrain.

During its session, the Committee had examined the situation of 250 parliamentarians in 14 countries. It had also adopted admissibility decisions in two new cases and declared one case inadmissible. The draft decisions to be presented for approval by the Governing Council concerned 190 parliamentarians in 10 countries.

It was important to honour the values of the IPU, which had been built on the premise of dialogue, inclusion and the possibility for diverse opinions to be heard and shared in the context of its work. Parliamentarians knew from their own parliaments that there could be fundamental and serious disagreements in their chambers. It was not necessarily a joy to hear criticism from opponents, but that was an essential ingredient of democratic life. Only by engaging with one another and keeping the door open to dialogue could progress together be made. It was critical also to honour that spirit of openness and inclusion within IPU Assemblies, irrespective of whether it concerned Member Parliaments or permanent observers.

The cases would be presented in alphabetical order, by region.

Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Committee was reporting for the first time on the situation of three parliamentarians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One of them had had his parliamentary mandate arbitrarily invalidated for absenteeism and the two others had been arbitrarily prevented from resuming their parliamentary functions.

Despite the medical certificates explaining his absence, Mr. Papy Niango's parliamentary mandate had been invalidated for absenteeism. The second case concerned Mr. Martin Kabuya and Mr. Crispin Ngbundu, who had been prevented from resuming their parliamentary functions after losing their governorships and despite a ruling by the Constitutional Court in their favour.

The Committee wished to receive the official views and observations of the parliamentary authorities on those cases and encouraged the Congolese authorities to take all necessary measures to guarantee the fundamental rights of all members of the National Assembly.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the two draft decisions relating to, respectively, the case of Mr. Papy Niango and the cases of two other Congolese parliamentarians.

Eswatini

The case in Eswatini concerned three parliamentarians, two of whom had been in detention on various charges since July 2021 in the aftermath of protests calling for democratic reforms in the country.

The Governing Council had before it, in document CL/211/14(c)-R.1, the report of the IPU trial observer who had attended some of the court hearings in the case. His findings confirmed the Committee's earlier concerns that the criminal cases brought against the parliamentarians came in response to their actions in support of political change. Moreover, the trial observer pointed to excessive delays in the legal proceedings and the unjustifiable dismissal of the parliamentarians' bail applications. The Committee sincerely hoped that, in reaching her verdict, the judge in the case would take due account of the observations made by the trial observer.

At the same time, the Committee remained keen to travel to Eswatini to discuss with the relevant authorities and other stakeholders the concerns and issues that had emerged in the case and hoped that this mission could take place as soon as possible.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of three Eswatini parliamentarians.

Senegal

The Committee first of all wished to thank the Senegalese delegation for the constructive discussions had with it in the context of the current Assembly, following which the Committee had adopted two decisions.

One of those decisions related to the situation of Mr. Khalifa Sall, a former parliamentarian who had been sentenced to a prison term in 2018. The Committee welcomed Mr. Sall's release following a presidential pardon in September 2019. It also welcomed the information that a draft amnesty law, which might enable Mr. Sall to recover fully his civil rights, was being prepared, and that Parliament would like to receive the IPU's assistance in preparing that law. The Committee invited the parliamentary authorities of Senegal to provide further information on how the IPU could best provide such assistance.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Khalifa Ababacar Sall.

The second decision in Senegal concerned the situation of Mr. Ousmane Sonko, who was currently facing a judicial investigation. Although the Committee was fully aware that justice should follow its course, it also noted that, in the past, other opposition candidates had been excluded from the presidential race after being convicted by the courts. The Committee hoped that the trial against Mr. Sonko would soon lead to a final judicial decision, in accordance with an independent and impartial procedure. The Committee called on all the relevant national authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure that all opposition candidates and their supporters were able to exercise their right to take part in the conduct of public affairs at the upcoming presidential election.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Ousmane Sonko.

Somalia

Regarding Somalia, the Committee had adopted a decision on the merits of the case of the late Ms. Amina Abdi, who had been brutally assassinated in a bomb attack one year earlier. The Committee was appalled by that murder of a woman parliamentarian, who had been known as a fearless defender of human rights. It called on the authorities to do everything to ensure that justice was done. It also urged the authorities to use the expertise of the IPU and other international bodies to that end.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Ms. Amina Mohamed Abdi.

Uganda

In respect of Uganda, the Committee had adopted three decisions, the first of which concerned the situation of two colleagues who had been arrested in September 2021. The Committee was pleased to inform the Governing Council that the two had been finally released on bail on 13 February 2023 and that the Committee had been able to send a trial observer to Uganda to monitor the trial proceedings. The Committee wished to thank the Speaker of Uganda for the information provided in writing on the case and the Parliament of Uganda for the steps taken to monitor the situation of Mr. Ssewanyana and Mr. Ssegirinya while in detention. The Committee remained concerned, however, about the reported lack of investigation into the allegations that they had been tortured and the alleged possible political motivation of the criminal proceedings. It regretted that the mission requested by the Governing Council to visit Uganda had not yet received official approval from the Ugandan authorities, and sincerely hoped that Parliament would do its utmost to make the mission happen as soon as possible.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of two Ugandan parliamentarians.

The Committee had also declared admissible two new cases regarding two female colleagues from Uganda, Ms. Betty Nambooze and Ms. Anna Adeke Ebaju. It invited Parliament to provide in writing the official views on the allegations made in both cases.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the two draft decisions relating to, respectively, the case of Ms. Betty Nambooze and the case of Ms. Anna Adeke Ebaju.

Americas

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

With regard to the collective case in Venezuela, the Committee reaffirmed its long-standing position that the continued harassment of parliamentarians elected in 2015 was a direct consequence of the prominent role they played as opposition parliamentarians. It was also convinced that the issues involved in the present case were part of the broader complex situation in Venezuela. The Committee reiterated the IPU's readiness to provide support for any effort to strengthen democracy in Venezuela, including the ongoing process of dialogue. It invited the Venezuelan authorities to provide further information on how best the IPU could help.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of 135 Venezuelan parliamentarians.

Asia

Cambodia

The draft decision before the Governing Council concerned the long-standing case of 38 former parliamentarians, all belonging to the Cambodian National Rescue Party dissolved by the Supreme Court in 2017. The Committee had had a fruitful exchange with the Cambodian delegation in Manama and understood that the invitation extended to it to travel to Cambodia to discuss the concerns in the case was still in place. The Committee hoped that the mission could take place as soon as possible, given that national elections were coming up in July 2023.

In the meantime, the Committee recommended that the authorities urgently resume political dialogue with all opposition parties, both inside and outside Cambodia. Only then would they be able to build trust and find solutions to the current political situation.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia) said that his delegation rejected the draft decision. In its hearing with the Committee on 11 March 2023, the delegation had given a full explanation of the charges. Furthermore, the 45 political parties mentioned on page 4 of the report as having registered to participate in the parliamentary elections had done so with the Ministry of the Interior and not with the National Election Commission. The thoroughness of the Committee's investigation of the charges by the complainant was, moreover, questionable and of particular concern, as no decision should be based on telephone calls or letters alone. He appealed to the Governing Council to consider the matter carefully before pronouncing on the draft decision.

The Governing Council adopted the draft decision relating to the cases of 42 Cambodian parliamentarians, taking note of the reservation expressed by the Cambodian delegation.

Pakistan

As to Pakistan, the Committee was pleased to state that, owing to the mobilization of a number of parliamentarians and other actors across the political spectrum, Mr. Muhammad Ali Wazir had been released on bail, having spent 26 months in a remand prison.

The Committee remained concerned by the impunity for the many allegations of harassment and arbitrary abuse against Mr. Wazir, as well as by allegations that due process guarantees had not been followed, despite the actions taken by the parliamentary authorities.

The Committee called on the authorities of Pakistan to do their share to ensure that that crime was not left unpunished and that the underlying factors for the pattern of impunity in Pakistani cases were addressed, including by bringing legislation in line with Pakistan's international obligations. That appeared to be the only way to prevent the recurrence of such cases.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Muhammad Ali Wazir.

Middle East and North Africa

Iraq

The Committee wished to thank the Iraqi delegation for the constructive and fruitful discussion had on the case of former Iraqi parliamentarian, Mr. Ahmed Jamil Salman Al-Alwani, and welcomed the visits carried out to Mr. Al-Alwani in detention and the steps taken by the judicial authorities to follow up on the IPU's recommendations.

The Committee considered that the situation of Mr. Al-Alwani should be seen as a national cause of concern. It therefore called on leaders to stand united for the protection and promotion of human rights by taking up Mr. Al-Alwani's case before the highest authority to promote his release, uphold his rights and ensure that he would not be executed as a result of politically motivated charges.

The Committee also reiterated its wish to visit Mr. Al-Alwani in detention in the near future and to meet with the relevant Iraqi authorities to promote the resolution of the case.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Ahmed Jamil Salman Al-Alwani.

Libya

The Committee thanked the Libyan delegation for the fruitful exchange and for having provided detailed information on the steps taken by the Libyan authorities to shed light on Ms. Seham Sergiwa's fate.

The Committee expressed its support to all members of the Libyan Parliament, above all women parliamentarians, given the serious challenges to their safety.

The Committee had learned that the case of Ms. Sergiwa was still under criminal and judicial investigation by the Attorney General and that she had been the victim of a vile online hate campaign that had led to her abduction. The Committee had also learned that such campaigns were routinely used to incite physical violence against parliamentarians, especially women.

The Committee called on the competent authorities to ensure that social media platforms were not used to circulate hateful messages against members of parliament, particularly women parliamentarians, and urged the executive authorities to establish the truth in Ms. Sergiwa's case.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Ms. Seham Sergiwa.

Mr. S. Cogolati (President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), concluding his presentation, said that the cases to which he had referred were but some of the numerous cases before the Committee. In view of the record growing number of cases, it was clear that being a parliamentarian could be truly dangerous. Unfortunately, that trend was apparent in all regions of the world. In the previous day's panel discussion on parliamentary solidarity with parliamentarians at risk, it had been very moving to listen to the testimonies of many colleagues

who had faced abuse, mistreatment and even death threats simply for doing their jobs. At the same time, it had been extremely inspiring to see that so many were working hard in their countries in support of their colleagues in danger.

To learn more about the specific actions that could be taken to help the Committee, parliamentarians were invited to sign up to its contact list so as to stay informed about its work and act accordingly. The Committee depended on parliamentary solidarity and support in order to implement its decisions.

He expressed heartfelt thanks to his fellow Committee members, with whom he was privileged to work, and to the IPU Secretariat staff, without whose hard work the Committee would be unable to carry out its mission and who were doing a wonderful job in helping to save and protect parliamentarians in danger around the world.

The Secretary General said that he wished to thank the President and members of the Committee for their sterling work in such a noble cause — work that they conducted mainly outside the limelight and with tremendous fair-mindedness and professionalism. Well aware of the many dilemmas faced by the Committee in the course of its examination of the cases before it, he was without fail heartened by its laudable resolve to bring to the fore the welfare of parliamentarians around the world who were suffering abuse. In continuing to discharge the important task entrusted to it, the Committee could be assured of the IPU's ongoing best support.

Mr. K. Sitttheamorn (Thailand) said that his delegation has raised two cases in his region with the Committee but they were missing from the report. The first concerned Myanmar, where the military authorities had executed four political prisoners, including a personal friend of his, in 2022. The IPU must do more to stop such executions, which were unacceptable, and to ensure that the country's authorities acted swiftly to hold democratic elections. In the interim, Thailand was hosting large numbers of Myanmar refugees and appealed for humanitarian assistance in that context.

The second case concerned Senator de Lima of the Philippines, who had been in pretrial detention for six years and had not been prosecuted for lack of evidence. The changes presently under way in the country offered an opportunity for the IPU to step up its demands for the Senator's immediate release.

Mr. C. Frolick (South Africa), thanking the Committee for its superb work, said that it served as a beacon of light for parliamentarians around the globe who were subjected to human rights abuses. His delegation had seen that work for itself when the South African Speaker had attended a hearing with the Committee on 13 March 2023, at its request, to explain an incident in parliament that had prompted a complaint against her. He wondered when the outcome of the hearing might be forthcoming.

Mr. S. Cogolati (President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), thanking the delegation for its fruitful discussion with the Committee and commending the South African Speaker for her leadership in her country and Parliament, said that the Committee had declared the case in question inadmissible.

The Secretary General said that he would be communicating the Committee's decision on the case to the parties concerned, including the Speaker, whose spirit of cooperation was appreciated. Concerning the remarks by the representative of Thailand, the Committee's caseload was such that it was not always possible for it to report publicly on every case. Its strategic approach was therefore to focus in its report on cases being presented for a decision while continuing to be apprised of all other cases before returning to the Governing Council in due course with answers. With regard to Senator de Lima, his understanding was that the Committee had decided in January 2023 to call for her release on the grounds that the charges against her were unfounded. As to Myanmar, it was a case of ongoing concern for the Committee, which would report on the matter once its deliberations had advanced further. He would convey to the Committee any information provided to him by Members that might guide its work.

Item 13 of the agenda

REPORT ON SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(CL/211/13-R.1-rev)

The Chair, introducing the item, said that oral or video presentations would be made on a number of the specialized meetings listed in document CL/211/13-R.1-rev, which also contained links to more detailed information available on each meeting on the IPU website.

Mr. K. Darwish (Egypt), reporting on the parliamentary meeting held in Sharm el-Sheikh on 13 November 2022 on the occasion of the COP27 UN Climate Change Conference, said that the many participating parliamentarians and experts had engaged in rich discussions aimed at providing solutions to key climate issues, including emission reduction, scaling up of adaptation efforts, and mobilization of climate finance, through supporting climate technology transfer, creating financial incentives for green investment and approving dedicated funding for adaptation and mitigation. The outcome document, which could be found via the link provided, reaffirmed the commitment to addressing those issues, with an emphasis on additional and separate funding for loss and damage.

A video on the regional workshop entitled “Addressing trade challenges: The contribution of Latin American and the Caribbean parliamentarians”, held in Buenos Aires from 28 to 29 November 2022, was screened.

The Secretary General said by way of further information that the workshop had formed part of the cooperation between the IPU and the World Trade Organization (WTO), which also included the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (PCWTO), a mechanism enabling parliamentarians from around the world to provide a degree of oversight of the WTO rules-based trading system. Workshop participants had learned about the major challenges to trade and how parliaments in the region could help. Similar workshops were envisaged in other regions. He thanked Guyanese Speaker Nadir for his strong leadership as PCWTO co-Chair and his energetic prosecution of the agenda set for providing the oversight mentioned.

Mr. A. Touizi (Morocco), providing an account of the annual Arab Regional Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda: *Strengthening parliamentary engagement in climate action in the Arab region*, held in Beirut from 29 to 30 November 2022 and again co-organized with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, said that participants had engaged constructively to identify actions for addressing the region’s vulnerability to climate change, which threatened its achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), above all those relating to poverty, hunger, and clean water and sanitation. Recommended actions had included the establishment of a multisectoral parliamentary body to elaborate appropriate measures, with country specificities in mind; strengthening of internal coordination for integrating the SDGs into parliamentary work; and enhancement of the effectiveness of inter-parliamentary communication and information-sharing on climate-related matters. Participants had been pleased in the knowledge that they could count on the IPU and its partners for support.

Mr. K. Kabre (Burkina Faso), reporting on the Second Regional Seminar for African Parliaments on achieving the SDGs, held in Djibouti from 5 to 7 December 2022, said that participants had taken stock of progress to date and reflected on ways of ensuring that parliaments played a decisive role in fostering sustainable development for all. With myriad socioeconomic and other factors continuing to slow the drive towards attainment of the SDGs, redoubled efforts were needed to build further on the progress achieved in the region. Participants had accordingly proposed measures in areas ranging from human rights, governance and climate change to health emergency preparedness and SDG financing and monitoring. Full details of those measures were contained in the summary report of the seminar found via the link provided.

Ms. N.B.K. Mutti (Zambia), outlining the activities of the Parliamentary Forum on the occasion of the Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) held in Doha on 4 March 2023, said that the five key messages that had emerged for improving the lot of LDCs related to global economic governance reform, enhanced domestic governance, wider information-sharing and mutual learning among LDCs, enjoyment of the right to development, and the centrality of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs for the Decade 2022-2031 to the achievement of the SDGs. Participants had underscored the vital role of parliaments in delivering on those messages through their representative, legislative and oversight functions. More work was needed, however, to enhance the effectiveness of parliaments, above all in the LDCs, in implementing such global commitments, another shared objective towards which the IPU could work in tandem with the United Nations.

Ms. V. Riotton (France), summarizing the work of the Parliamentary Meeting at the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women held in New York on 7 March 2023, said that participants had focused on the role of parliaments in promoting gender equality through technology, highlighting in that context the need for measures to bolster women's empowerment and engagement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; address technology-facilitated violence against women and girls; and enhance understanding of and potential for the use of technology in parliamentary work. The outcomes of a subsequent side event entitled *Achieving equality in decision-making by 2030: What will it take?* would furthermore inform the elaboration of a new general recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. The IPU's work and data on parity and violence against women parliamentarians had been highly commended.

Mr. D. McGuinty (Canada), reporting on the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations held in New York from 13 to 14 February 2023, said that the hearing — its topic "*Water for people and the planet: Stop the waste, change the game, invest in the future*" reflecting the IPU's commitment to the implementation of SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation — had dovetailed around key UN events focused on water-related matters. Parliamentarians must hammer home the takeaways from the vigorous discussions throughout concerning the need for urgent action to address the stark facts about, among others, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, the linkage between water and disaster, and water as a global and national security issue. Many participants had taken the opportunity provided by the hearing to engage with their ambassadors in New York and with senior UN officials, thereby also reminding them of the enormous help that parliamentarians could offer in working with them on shared agendas.

The Governing Council took note of the report on specialized meetings.

Item 14 of the agenda
(resumed)

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES
(CL/211/14-P.1)

(a) Forum of Women Parliamentarians
(CL/211/14(a)-R.1)

Ms. H. Ramzy Fayez (Bahrain), President of the 35th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the session held on 11 and 14 March 2023, as contained in document CL/211/14(a)-R.1, said that participants had considered through a gender lens the draft resolution on cyberattacks and cybercrimes prepared by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, which had incorporated its proposed amendments into the text to be presented for adoption by the Assembly. Participants had agreed that comprehensive gender-sensitive and victim-centric legislation must be urgently introduced to prevent technology-facilitated gender-based violence, with steps to address women's underrepresentation in the cybersecurity sector also constituting a priority. In a panel discussion focused on putting gender equality at the centre of water security, climate resilience and peace sustainability, the Forum had underlined the need to increase women's participation across all those areas and develop related gender-responsive strategies and measures. In congratulating the newly elected members of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, she warmly thanked its outgoing President, Ms. Vasylenko of Ukraine, for her courageous and resolute dedication in difficult circumstances to working for the protection and empowerment of women everywhere.

The Chair, likewise congratulating the outgoing President of the Bureau on her work in those circumstances especially, said she took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the election of Ms. C.I. López Castro of Mexico as the new President of the Bureau, Ms. F. Ilimi Haddouche of Algeria as its Vice-President, and Ms. A.N. Ayyoub Awadallah of Egypt as its Second Vice-President.

It was so decided.

Mr. D. Pacheco, President of the IPU, resumed the Chair.

(b) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/211/14(b)-R.1)

Ms. S. Albazar (Egypt), President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the Forum's meeting of 12 March 2023, as contained in document CL/211/14(b)-R.1, said that participants had pledged to continue promoting youth participation, whether in the IPU or national contexts, and taken stock of progress achieved in that regard. Successes included the new quarterly Empowerment Series consisting of online expert briefings for young parliamentarians on pressing global issues; the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign joined by many parliamentarians and several heads of State; and the establishment of new youth caucuses. In debating the leadership role of young parliamentarians in promoting peace, emphasis had been laid on education to foster peace, inclusion and tolerance and on legislation to combat hate and discrimination. Special measures to protect young people from online harm had also been discussed. With her term of office about to end, she was grateful for the opportunity to have served young parliamentarians, thanked her fellow outgoing Board members for their dedicated efforts to the cause, and wished new Board members the best of luck in their new task.

The President, expressing thanks to Ms. Albazar for her work with and on behalf of young parliamentarians, said that she was a hard act for her successor to follow but would surely continue her diligent efforts in favour of the IPU.

He took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the election of the new Board members for a two-year term ending in March 2025, specifically: Mr. D. Carden (United Kingdom) as President and as members, Mr. M.A. Bouchouit (Algeria) and Ms. E.T. Muteka (Namibia) for the African Group; Mr. K. Ait Mik (Morocco) and Ms. S. Falaknaz (United Arab Emirates) for the Arab Group; Ms. D.R. Esti (Indonesia) and Mr. F.K.L. Fakafanua (Tonga) for the Asia-Pacific Group; Ms. H. Hakobyan (Armenia) for the Eurasia Group, with the second vacancy remaining open; Ms. P. Aguirre (Ecuador) and Mr. W. Soto Palacios (Peru) for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean; and Ms. O. Rudenko (Ukraine) for the Twelve Plus Group, with the second vacancy accounted for by Mr. Carden.

It was so decided.

(e) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/211/14(e)-R.1)

Mr. J.K. Waweru (Kenya), member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, presenting the report of the Committee's meeting held on 14 March 2023, as contained in document CL/211/14(e)-R.1, said that the Committee had noted little improvement in the humanitarian crises affecting refugees and internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Ukraine, which it had been monitoring over time. New dimensions adding complexity included climate change, socioeconomic challenges and prevalent gender-based violence. The Committee had made a special plea in respect of Afghanistan, where life-saving efforts were now a priority for support agencies and access to health care and education for women and girls was all-important. It had called for wars to stop, for respect for international humanitarian law, and for parliamentary support for relief and assistance efforts in crisis-affected and refugee host countries alike, with an emphasis on legislation in the latter to facilitate the inclusion of refugees in national systems. All parliamentarians were invited to follow up on their country's pledges to the Global Compact on Refugees in preparation for the Global Refugee Forum in late 2023 and to work on facilitating new pledges.

(f) Group of Facilitators for Cyprus
(CL/211/14(f)-R.1)

No oral report was presented under this item.

(g) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/211/14(g)-R.1)

Ms. A.D. Mergane Kanouté (Senegal), member of the Gender Partnership Group, presenting the report on the Group's session held on 10 and 14 March 2023, as contained in document CL/211/14(g)-R.1, and citing the relevant figures, said that women parliamentarians accounted for almost one third of delegates at the current Assembly, which was a record in absolute terms and a trend to be furthered. Concerning its development of an IPU policy to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at IPU Assemblies and other IPU events, as agreed in Kigali, the Committee had reviewed a first draft and aimed to have a final draft ready for consideration at the 147th Assembly. The Group had also engaged in dialogue with the delegation of Maldives, where women's representation in politics had somewhat improved in recent years but remained far from satisfactory, as detailed in the report along with the particular difficulties facing women in Maldives politics. With elections due in 2024, it was important to support the efforts under way to build on the improvements already achieved in Maldives, which was assured of IPU support in the matter.

The President, noting that the term of office of Ms. Mergane Kanouté as Vice-President of the Executive Committee was about to end, said that he much appreciated her commitment to her endeavours throughout that term and looked forward to her continued hard work in future for the benefit of the IPU.

The Governing Council took note of the activities of committees and other bodies.

The sitting rose at 13:55.

Third sitting

Wednesday, 15 March 2023
(Afternoon)

In the absence of Mr. D. Pacheco, President of the IPU, Ms. A.D. Mergane Kanouté (Senegal), Vice-President of the IPU, took the Chair.

The sitting was called to order at 15:30.

Item 14 of the agenda
(continued)

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES (CL/211/14-P.1)

(d) Committee on Middle East Questions (CL/211/14(d)-R.1)

Ms. F. Benbadis (Algeria), member of the Committee on Middle East Questions, reporting on the Committee's meeting of 12 March 2023, as set out in document CL/211/14(d)-R.1, said that participants had reiterated their commitment to working together through mutual understanding and constructive dialogue towards building bridges for lasting peace in the region. Alarmed by the upsurge in violence and hate incidents in Israel and Palestine in 2023, the Committee had decided to set up a focus group to find ways of reconciling the two sides — in addition to focus groups on the Yemeni and Libyan crises — and to reorganize its postponed visit to the region. It had also received briefings on the positive outcomes of the first IPU Science for Peace Schools session held in Geneva in December 2022, with a second session scheduled for July 2023, and on the critical work of the UN Relief and Works Agency, which was facing an existential crisis due to lack of funding. All parliamentarians were urged to facilitate requisite support for ensuring the Agency's continued assistance to Palestine refugees.

Mr. A. Golroo (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he wished to express a reservation to the report, as it contained an allegation against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an official part of the Iranian military forces. The inference was wholly unacceptable and must be expunged from the report. As he understood it, the Committee had no mandate to refer to such alleged communications that it received.

(h) Advisory Group on Health (CL/211/14(h)-R.1)

Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain), President of the Advisory Group on Health, in delivering the report of the Group's meeting of 11 March 2023 as detailed in document CL/211/14(h)-R.1, said that the Group's discussions had covered ways of strengthening the IPU's relevance in the global health arena and implementing the health components of the IPU Strategy; the importance of human rights obligations in health-related work; the Group's rules and practices; and cooperation with the IPU's technical partners. It had also decided to act on its outreach mandate by organizing a field visit in 2023 to learn about and document practices relating to equity in health, especially for marginalized groups, and would welcome proposals from interested host countries, one of which to date was Pakistan. With universal health coverage a key step towards such equity, the IPU and the World Health Organization (WHO) had co-produced a handbook for parliamentarians entitled *The path towards universal health coverage*, to be launched at the present session by way of a video message from the WHO Director-General.

Dr. T.A. Ghebreyesus (Director-General of the WHO) said in his video message that it gave him great pleasure to launch the new handbook for parliamentarians, who were uniquely placed to transform political commitment to universal health coverage into reality, in accordance with the related landmark IPU resolution adopted in 2019. Together with the accompanying briefs, the handbook provided guidance on leveraging the parliamentary role in law-making, finance, taxation and accountability to advance universal health coverage. He encouraged parliamentarians to draw

on IPU and WHO expertise and to engage in the UN High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September 2023. With sustainable financing critical to the WHO's delivery of long-term country programming, top quality norms and standards, and emergency responses, he urged support at the World Health Assembly, in May 2023, for the first phase of the step-wise increase of assessed contributions agreed by WHO Member States in 2022. In closing, he thanked the IPU for its commitment to universal health coverage and a healthier, safer and fairer future for all.

Mr. J.I. Echániz (Spain), President of the Advisory Group on Health —emphasizing that the millions of pandemic-related deaths had shown health care to be no fad or minor matter —said, in conclusion, that IPU attention to a wide range of health issues was essential. Health policy training for young people and the sharing of good practices were also important. Steps should therefore be taken to increase the Group's relevance and capabilities, to which end it intended to develop a concept note for consideration by the Executive Committee at its upcoming meeting. He thanked all Group members and the IPU Secretariat for their commitment to building a healthy world.

The Secretary General said that health was among the key policy areas identified by the IPU for serving the people through democracy and strong parliaments and that the Advisory Group was the IPU's statutory body dedicated to reflecting on and directing its health-related policies. Parliaments without the necessary wherewithal needed support, however, to deal with highly technical matters in particular. Reflecting current realities, the new handbook took into account overall developments and lessons learned since the adoption of the resolution in 2019 on achieving universal health coverage. The IPU worked tirelessly to promote the parliamentary contribution towards that goal, especially as it was intrinsically linked with global health security. It encouraged parliamentarians to attend a first-ever African high-level parliamentary conference on strengthening health security preparedness, to be held in Cape Town in May 2023.

The handbook entitled "The path to universal health coverage" was officially launched.

Mr. D. Pacheco, President of the IPU, took the Chair.

(i) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism
(CL/211/14(i)-R.1)

Mr. M. Bouden (Algeria), Chairperson of the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, in delivering the report on the Group's work as detailed in document CL/211/14(i)-R.1, said that, at its meeting of 13 March 2023, after electing him as its Chairperson and Ms. A. Vadai of Hungary as its Vice-Chairperson, the Group had discussed the outcomes of the three thematic meetings of the *Call of the Sahel* and agreed on four overarching principles for engaging with the Sahel countries. Building on the first of those three meetings, which had taken place at the 145th Assembly in Kigali, the second thematic meeting, held in Algiers in February 2023, had produced the 19 recommendations summarized in the report. As to the third thematic meeting, held on 11 March 2023 at the current Assembly, it had produced the further recommendations also summarized in the report. All three thematic meetings had been attended by senior representatives of relevant UN and other organizations. At its own recent meeting, the Group had additionally identified next steps, which related to internal coordination, inter-parliamentary coordination, and communication and visibility.

The President, congratulating Mr. Bouden on his election, said that the IPU counted on him to ensure that the Group remained highly active in pursuing its important task of countering terrorism and violent extremism. Concerning the election of members of the Group for a four-year term of office ending in March 2027, the candidates proposed by the geopolitical groups for the available vacancies were Ms. L.M. Al Zaabi (Oman) and Mr. A. Alharbi (Saudi Arabia) for the Arab Group; Ms. S. Ambareesh (India) and Mr. A. Golroo (Iran, Islamic Republic of) for the Asia-Pacific Group; Ms. M. Guerra Castillo (Mexico) for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean; and Mr. D. Danone (Israel) and Mr. M. Karlsson (Sweden) for the Twelve Plus Group. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the election of those candidates.

It was so decided.

Mr. M. Hadid (Palestine) said that his delegation had submitted to the Office of the IPU President a written objection to the candidature of Israel for election as a member of the Advisory Group, the establishment of which had given rise to hopes of redress for victims of terrorism, and of action aimed at curbing terrorism and extremism. For the Group to have an Israeli representative as a member would undermine its founding objectives. First, the Israeli Parliament was dominated by terrorist settlers whose fellow groups called for extermination of the Palestinian people and were, moreover, wanted in Israel for their routine acts of terrorism. It was furthermore responsible for a set of apartheid laws that were the very essence of violent extremism. As an occupying State, moreover, Israel was engaged in the worst form of terrorism and human rights violations, in flagrant disregard of UN resolutions and with no accountability. Through its membership of the Group, Israel was seeking to secure its impunity and be absolved of responsibility for its systemic State terrorism against defenceless Palestinians. That membership ran counter to the IPU's core principles and values and must be rejected by all.

The President, while taking note of the reservation expressed, said that some of the wording used to articulate it was inappropriate, as different opinions must be respected as having equal legitimacy. As to the Israeli membership of the Advisory Group, the Governing Council had taken its decision on the basis of the nominations received from the geopolitical groups.

(j) Working Group on Science and Technology
(CL/211/14(j)-R.1)

Mr. D. Naughten (Ireland), Chairperson of the Working Group on Science and Technology, reporting on the Group's meeting of 13 March 2023, as set out in document CL/211/14(j)-R.1, said that the Group's role was to facilitate access for parliamentarians to the myriad solutions offered by science to existing and emerging problems through building on knowledge shared around the delivery of vital global commitments as a result of policy and legislative change. In its meeting, the Group had agreed its work plan for 2023, which included active participation in a number of UN science-related events and the pursuit of pilot projects for engaging the scientific community in parliamentary decision-making and developing a related toolkit for approval at the 147th Assembly. Concerning delivery of the cybercrime resolution prepared by the Standing Committee on International Peace and Security, the Group was available to provide support, in which case no working group on cybercrime would be needed. The Group had applauded the success of the first IPU Science for Peace Schools session and agreed to hold a follow-up event and a subsequent second session. Lastly, it had re-elected Ms. S. Attia of Egypt as its Vice-Chairperson.

The President, thanking the Group for its amazing work, said that two candidatures had been received for the three vacancies for a four-year term of office ending in March 2027, specifically those of Mr. A.H. Saleh of Iraq for the Arab Group and Mr. K. Tontisirin of Thailand for the Asia-Pacific Group. He took it that the Governing Council wished to elect those candidates as members of the Working Group.

It was so decided.

The Governing Council took note of the activities of committees and other bodies.

Item 15 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(cf. Article 21(k) of the Statutes and Rules 37, 38 and 39 of the Governing Council)
(CL/211/15-P.1 and P.2)

The President, acknowledging with heartfelt thanks the consistently strong and active role played in the Executive Committee by its two outgoing members, Ms. Adjii Diarra Mergane Kanouté of Senegal and Ms. Cecilia Widegren of Sweden, said that the two candidatures detailed in documents CL/211/15-P.1 and P.2 had been received for the two vacancies. The first, from the Twelve Plus Group, was that of Ms. Janine Alm Ericsson of Sweden to complete the remaining term of Ms. Widegren, who was no longer a member of parliament, and the second, from the African Group, was that of Ms. Ida Kamongji Nasserwa Sabangu of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo for a four-year term of office ending in March 2027 to replace Ms. Mergane Kanouté, whose term was coming to an end. He took it that the Governing Council wished to elect both candidates as members of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The President, congratulating the new members on their election, expressed confidence that they would make a valuable contribution to the Executive Committee and to the IPU as a whole.

Item 16 of the agenda

THE IPU ANTHEM

The President, recalling the decision taken at the 144th Assembly in Nusa Dua to create an IPU anthem as a symbol of identity for the Organization, said that the Secretariat had accordingly drafted terms of reference and identified a process of consultation with musical experts, following which composers wishing to submit proposals had been requested to do so by 31 December 2022. With the help of a musical expert, a shortlist of 2 had been created from the 19 proposals received. Having considered the shortlist, the Executive Committee's recommendation was that the musical piece composed by Mr. Pedro Halffter should be selected as the IPU Anthem to be played at the beginning of IPU Assemblies and other IPU events.

The musical piece recommended for selection as the IPU Anthem was played.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the recommended piece.

It was so decided.

Item 17 of the agenda

THE CREMER-PASSY PRIZE
(CL/211/17-P.1)

The President, recalling the decision taken at the 142nd IPU Assembly in May 2021 to establish the Cremer-Passy prize named after the IPU's two founding fathers and conferred on parliamentarians for outstanding contributions to the defence and promotion of IPU objectives, said that the Executive Committee, on the basis of the experience gained from the first award of the annual prize in 2022, had recommended improvements to the related rules.

The Secretary General, drawing attention to the proposed amendments to those rules as set out in the annex to document CL/211/17-P.1, said that the improvements were intended to streamline the award process and clarify the role of the geopolitical groups in the nomination exercise. The composition and procedures of the Prize Selection Board, set out in article 6 of the rules, had also been further clarified, including to provide for a number of potential scenarios. If approved, the rules as amended would enter into immediate effect, with climate change as the proposed focus for the 2023 prize.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the proposed amendments to the Cremer-Passy prize rules, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

An information video on the Cremer-Passy prize was screened.

The President said that 30 April was the closing date for nominations for the 2023 prize, which should preferably be associated with the subject of climate change in tandem with the IPU's own strategic priority for 2023.

Item 10 of the agenda
(continued)

REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE IPU
(CL/211/10-P.1)

Ms. T. Ackson (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the African Group in connection with the earlier discussion under the item, said that she and interested colleagues had since consulted with the Egyptian delegation, which had given its assurance that any IPU regional office in Cairo would serve countries of the African Group as well as of the Arab Group. It had therefore been unanimously agreed in principle that the procedures for the establishment of such an office as a pilot should commence.

Mr. H. Gebaly (Egypt), confirming that information, said that the IPU regional office in Cairo would provide services to members of both geopolitical groups on an equal basis, without distinction of any kind. It would gladly extend help to all while also looking to all for help towards ensuring its success. Egypt was ready for the venture and stood poised to finalize all necessary procedures in coordination with the IPU and the secretariat of the Egyptian Parliament.

The Secretary General said that his earlier concerns had thus been satisfactorily addressed and that he would proceed accordingly.

Item 18 of the agenda

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. A. Korniyenko (Ukraine) said that the Parliament of Ukraine wished to honour the President of the IPU in recognition of his critical leadership throughout difficult times for Ukraine and indeed the world. It also wished to thank the Secretary General and his team for their excellent work and support.

On behalf of the Parliament of Ukraine, the representative presented a certificate and medal of honour to the President of the IPU.

The President, expressing thanks for the honour received, said that he had in truth done nothing more than his duty.

Following the customary exchange of courtesies, he declared the 211th session of the Governing Council closed.

The sitting rose at 16:45.