



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

CL/213/SR
4 June 2024

Summary records of the Governing Council

213rd session

24 and 27 March 2024

Geneva, Switzerland

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First sitting

Sunday, 24 March 2024
(Morning)

The sitting was called to order at 09:15, with Dr. T. Ackson (United Republic of Tanzania), President of the IPU, in the Chair.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

The President, warmly welcoming participants back to Geneva after a hiatus of almost six years during which IPU Assemblies had been held either elsewhere or online, said that Member Parliaments had demonstrated unwavering support for the IPU, which was immensely grateful for the visibility and recognition gained largely thanks to their actions at home and abroad. With the most precious value of peace now under greater threat than ever, it was vital to keep that momentum going, as recognized by the IPU's choice of priority theme for 2024, namely peace and security, and of *Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding* as the topic for the current Assembly's General Debate. All IPU Member Parliaments must be ambassadors for peace by making good use of parliamentary diplomacy as an efficient tool with not only countless benefits but also peace as its overriding objective.

The Secretary General, echoing the welcome to participants, said that Dr. Ackson could be assured of full support from the IPU Secretariat in working to discharge with success her esteemed functions during her maiden Assembly as IPU President in, moreover, the IPU's home city of Geneva. Highly relevant in the modern era of multiple crises, the Assembly's overarching theme of peace and security would provide focus and an opportunity for delegates to articulate their views as to how the IPU should continue to promote those two core values.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CL/213/A.1-rev.2)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 212TH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (CL/212/SR)

The summary records of the 212th session of the Governing Council were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 148TH ASSEMBLY

The President, recalling the established practice of nominating the IPU President to preside over Assemblies taking place in Geneva, where there was no Host Parliament, said she took it that the Council would wish her to serve as President of the 148th Assembly.

It was so decided.

Item 4 of the agenda

**REPORT BY THE IPU PRESIDENT ON HER ACTIVITIES SINCE
THE 212TH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

The President, accompanying her report with a digital slide presentation, said that, since the 212th session of the Governing Council, she had worked to strengthen peace and security through dialogue, first on a visit to Israel and Palestine, in November 2023, where she had met the respective Prime Ministers and Speakers of Parliament, together with leading ministers, and secondly in a meeting with the Speakers of the Parliaments of Armenia and Azerbaijan. She had also endeavoured to reinforce the IPU's visibility through participation, again in November 2023, in a webinar on preventing and responding to violence against women in parliaments and in the 9th MIKTA Speakers' Consultation held in Bali, Indonesia; in January 2024, in the 27th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth, held in Kampala, Uganda; and in March 2024, in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum held in Antalya, Türkiye, and in the Women Speakers' Summit held in Paris, France.

In addition, she had worked to support the implementation of the IPU 2022–2026 Strategy through her participation, in December 2023, in the high-level segment of the 28th session of the United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference (COP28); in February 2024, in the annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, where she had met the UN Secretary-General and the President of the UN General Assembly and underscored the IPU's commitment to working with the United Nations in all areas of shared interest; and in March 2024, in the annual IPU–UN Women Parliamentary Meeting at the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, during which she and the President of the Club de Madrid, a forum of democratic former presidents and prime ministers, had agreed that their two organizations should work in close conjunction to promote democracy and change.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia), highlighting in particular the visit conducted to the Middle East and supported by **Mr. J. Buttiner** (Ireland), **Ms. D. Hastings-Williams** (Guyana) and **Ms. H. Alhelaissi** (Saudi Arabia), expressed thanks to the IPU President for the activities that she had undertaken in the short time since assuming office, which were both impressive and highly commendable.

The President said, with reference to her Middle East visit, that the Executive Committee believed that parliamentarians had a collective responsibility to create a platform for dialogue between the Parliaments of Israel and Palestine. Concerning its activities since the previous Assembly, the Executive Committee, in addition to those that would be reported on under the relevant agenda items, had taken note of the arrangements for securing good attendance at IPU meetings from among the world's 46,000 parliamentarians and recommended that the Secretariat should continue to enhance its approach to communicating the related information through all available channels. It had likewise taken note of the Secretary General's update concerning the ongoing discussions with the International Parliamentary Congress (IPC) to identify areas of cooperation on which a memorandum of understanding could perhaps be concluded with the IPU.

The Executive Committee had also been briefed on preparations for the current 148th Assembly, for which registration was high, and hoped that the gathering would provide a real opportunity for parliamentarians to explore significant actions for the restoration of peace in what was a challenging context of conflict around the world. As well as encouraging Member Parliaments to organize events on parliamentary diplomacy around the International Day of Parliamentarism, on 30 June 2024, to mark the IPU's 135th anniversary, the Executive Committee urged them to prioritize dialogue to avoid a repeat of the failure to agree on the addition of an emergency item to the agenda of the 147th Assembly, not least because the resolutions emanating from such items conveyed key messages to the world from the parliamentary community. It had taken note of the ongoing process and preparations for amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules and wished success to those of its members who had been tasked to join the Working Group responsible for reviewing such amendments. Assisted by the Secretary General, the Group would develop a package of amendments for presentation to the IPU membership within the statutory deadline with a view to their adoption at the 149th Assembly in October 2024.

The Executive Committee had also received a report on the activities of the Committee on Middle East Questions, notably its recent meeting in February 2024, which she had attended, along with the Secretary General and representatives of Israel and Palestine. It had concurred that both sides must make every effort to stop the war and end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, believing, moreover, that all conflicts deserved the same attention. It encouraged the Committee on Middle East

Questions to undertake a field visit to Israel and Palestine at the earliest opportunity to obtain first-hand details that would inform its approach and contribution to resolving the current crisis in the region. Lastly, in taking note of the implementation of the IPU Communications Strategy, the Executive Committee had commended the Secretariat's efforts to increase the IPU's visibility and invited Member Parliaments to unify their communication approach to that end.

Mr. E. Zingeris (Lithuania) said that, in light of the IPU's tremendous efforts to find common ground for peace, it was regrettable that the session's agenda contained no item to address the major issue of the Russian war involving daily attacks on Ukraine. Concerning the conflict between Hamas and Israel, it was right to support the citizens of Gaza while at the same time retaining the assumption – albeit largely European – that Hamas was a terrorist organization.

The President, taking note of those comments, recalled that the IPU had its own Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, which was due to report to the current session on its work to date. Conflicts such as that in Ukraine were ordinarily addressed, however, by way of an emergency item or a committee report, in line with the IPU Statutes and Rules. She took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of her report on her activities and those of the Executive Committee since the 212th session.

It was so decided.

Item 5 of the agenda

PRESENTATION BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE IPU IMPACT REPORT FOR 2023

The Secretary General, accompanying his presentation with a number of digital slides, said that the Impact Report for 2023 summarized the IPU's work throughout that year to utilize the human, material and other resources available to it for realizing its mandate to promote democracy for everyone – at a time when the world was mired in crisis and conflict and faced with major challenges relating to climate change, inequality, pushback on democratic issues, and a worrisome trend of emerging populism and authoritarianism. As to the membership figure, it had risen to 180 with the reaffiliation of Liberia and the affiliation of the Bahamas, bringing the Organization gradually closer towards the universality for which it continued to strive, currently with a special focus on Caribbean parliaments. With the President of the Senate of Jamaica attending the 148th Assembly to witness its deliberations, the hope was that his experience would prompt Jamaica to reaffiliate with the IPU, which would be pleased to see its efforts culminate in yet more additions to its membership at the 149th Assembly.

Covering the second year of the implementation of the IPU 2022–2026 Strategy, the report revealed the diversity of activities undertaken in response to challenges faced by Member Parliaments. It encapsulated the work done to broaden the IPU's reach so as to appeal to all constituencies represented within the Organization, such as capacity-building for a dozen or so parliaments, notably in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and to help parliaments become greener as well as younger and more gender equal and thus more representative and inclusive of all components of society. Parliaments across the board were consequently growing more active and more diverse, with women now constituting 26.9% of the global parliamentary membership, which was welcome progress but all too slow. Starting with political parties, all those empowered to make a difference on that score were encouraged to do so through, for example, legislated quotas and other measures of proven worth. For its part, the IPU was continuing its efforts towards gender parity. At IPU Assemblies, women's representation averaged around 35.3%, which, although promising, could be bettered, as indicated by the previous record of 38%.

In the area of climate, the IPU's *Parliaments for the Planet* campaign launched at the 146th Assembly in Manama and supported by leaders across the world had continued to gain traction among parliaments, attesting to their desire to combat climate change more robustly. On another note, the growing workload of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was disheartening for an organization dedicated to promoting the role of parliaments. The Committee was to be commended on its impactful work, which had resulted in 2023 in the release of nine parliamentarians in various countries, including thanks to assistance from the authorities in the cases of Gabon and the Philippines.

In the context of its development of tools for strengthening parliaments and their effectiveness, the IPU had in 2023 launched the Indicators for Democratic Parliaments and looked forward to seeing others follow the lead of the three Member Parliaments that had already used the material to assess

their performance. In terms of youth representation, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe were instances of parliaments that had created youth caucuses as a result of cooperation with the IPU. Bahrain and Burkina Faso had introduced electoral laws to increase the number of youth in parliament and other governing institutions, as was also the case in Armenia, which had one of the world's youngest parliaments.

Concerning support for innovative parliaments, the IPU continued through its Centre for Innovation in Parliament to encourage parliaments to reap the benefits of new digital technologies by integrating them into their work while remaining aware of potential dangers associated with, for example, artificial intelligence – another matter that featured prominently in the IPU agenda. The IPU had furthermore worked to promote peaceful coexistence through bridge-building and dialogue between parliaments and faith-based communities. In June 2023, for instance, it had co-organized with the Moroccan Parliament an important Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, which would be followed in 2024 by a similar event in Italy, with input from the Vatican and various faith-based groups.

With regard to the promotion of accountability as another vital strategic objective, the *Code of Conduct for IPU Governance Officials* had been adopted in 2023, along with the *Policy to prevent and address harassment, including sexual harassment, at IPU Assemblies and other IPU events*, with which Member Parliaments were requested to acquaint themselves. Any alleged incidents of harassment or failure to uphold the standards articulated in the Policy could be reported in confidence to the two designated focal points by emailing speakout@ipu.org.

After reviewing the implementation of the IPU Strategy, the Executive Committee had concluded that progress was good. It was also reassuring for all that the new IPU President was fully on board with the efforts to continue enhancing the IPU's visibility and had already done much in that sphere within a very short time frame. More work was needed, however, to further increase the Organization's visibility on social media platforms and highlight the work of IPU office holders. Commending the Impact Report for 2023 to the membership for consideration, he emphasized that the IPU always aspired to do better and remain worthy of the trust placed in it by Member Parliaments to make optimal use of the resources that they made available to it.

Mr. O. Diallo (Burkina Faso) expressed thanks to the IPU for the support provided to his country's Transitional Legislative Assembly and people, including in connection with the fight against terrorism and insecurity in the Sahel.

Mr. K. Albakkar (Jordan), in expressing appreciation for the IPU President's visit to the Middle East, said that it was imperative to focus on the catastrophic humanitarian situation caused by the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, where the starvation of civilians and use of certain weapons amounted to a war crime. Concerning women and youth in Jordanian politics, their participation had increased thanks to systemic reforms, including new electoral laws providing a quota for women and reducing the age limit for parliamentary candidates to 25 years.

The President said on another matter that the Executive Committee had endorsed and recommended the IPU's signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement with the aim of creating a conducive environment for cooperation on such matters as gender equality, sustainable development, climate change, promotion of human rights and democracy, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building. It had also recommended that the Secretary General should seek to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the activities conducted so as to consolidate their sustainable impact.

She took it that the Governing Council wished to approve those two recommendations and take note of the Impact Report for 2023.

It was so decided.

Item 6 of the agenda

IPU PRIORITY THEME FOR 2024

The Secretary General, providing an overview of activities undertaken to date in connection with the IPU priority theme for 2024, said that the choice of peace and security for that theme was extremely pertinent in the current challenging global context. In February 2024, the annual Parliamentary Meeting at the United Nations had focused on prescriptions for a peaceful future, with the United Nations and the IPU seeing eye to eye on the need for more robust prosecution of the

peace and security agenda. Throughout the current Assembly, deliberations would revolve around its overarching theme, *Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding*, and include the consideration of a highly relevant draft resolution on addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence. IPU structures intently engaged in promoting peace, notably the Committee on Middle East Questions, the Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law and the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus, would also be reporting to the Assembly on their laudable work. The IPU was working in addition to combat the grave threat posed by extremism and terrorism to the Sahel region. It had also helped to obtain no less than 10 further – and in fact critical – ratifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, but recognized nonetheless that it must do more to promote the ratification of international treaties relating to peace and security. Its aim in 2024 was to improve coherence among all the strands mentioned so that it could more precisely assess the impact of its activities to promote the global peace agenda, concerning which a further overview would be provided at the 149th Assembly.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of the overview of activities undertaken in respect of the IPU priority theme for 2024 and to pledge in that connection to concentrate efforts on parliamentary diplomacy.

It was so decided.

Item 7 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2023 AND FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE IPU (CL/213/7-R.1 to R.3)

Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates), member of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, presenting the financial report and audited financial statements for 2023 and the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2024, as set out respectively in documents CL/213/7-R.1 and R.2, said that the accounts for 2023 showed that the IPU had recovered from the impact of the global downturn in 2022 and was in a healthy financial situation, with an end-of-year operating surplus of over CHF 150,000. The surplus had been added to the Working Capital Fund, which currently stood at 91% of its 2023 target level, and expenditures were within budget for each strategic objective. Investment income had improved, thanks to favourable market conditions, and voluntary funds had been successfully mobilized, showing that the IPU's partners viewed its work as worthy of support.

In recent years, however, arrears in Member Parliaments' contributions had been steadily rising, primarily on account of the exceptional situation of the Venezuelan Parliament, which was currently in arrears to the tune of CHF 662,000. In addition to encouraging the governing bodies to address that situation, the Sub-Committee on Finance requested all Member Parliaments to work through their geopolitical groups to reduce the number of other Member Parliaments in arrears. The IPU's new External Auditor, the Audit Board of the Republic Indonesia, had given a positive audit opinion, confirmed the accuracy of the financial statements and judged the IPU's key financial indicators to be sound. It had also made three recommendations concerning the IPU legacy pension fund, the classification of certain travel costs and the arrears in assessed contributions.

The financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2024 had changed little since the end of 2023 and the budget performance to date was on track, with finances remaining healthy and stable in the current investment market, which continued to perform well. Although the number of Member Parliaments in arrears had fallen slightly, the matter should be closely monitored throughout the year.

In conclusion, the Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should approve the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU and the financial statements for 2023.

Mr. H. Carneiro (Portugal), Internal Auditor, after reading out his report as set out in document CL/213/7-R.3, said that his recommendation fully accorded with that of the Executive Committee.

The Secretary General, welcoming those recommendations, said that he had consistently strived throughout his tenure to keep the IPU's finances on an even keel. Assisted by his colleagues, he would continue to do his level best to ensure that the resources available to the IPU were well spent. Wholly concurring with the three recommendations mentioned by Mr. Al Nuaimi and detailed in

the Internal Auditor's report, he had already instructed colleagues to look into the situation pertaining to the legacy pension fund and its future liabilities, which were linked with the life expectancy of the beneficiaries and which the IPU remained under moral obligation to honour by allowing for them in its budget. The IPU was also keenly committed to implementing the other two recommendations to review its use and classification of travel allowances and its follow-up of the situation of Member Parliaments in arrears. In the latter case, reassuring progress had already been achieved since the time of the reports, with the payment of assessed contributions currently amounting to about 62% of the total due. The Executive Committee would examine the matter further and revisit, at its next meeting in either June or October 2024, the question of how to deal with Member Parliaments that were chronically in arrears.

Roughly 75% of the IPU budget, was funded by assessed contributions, with the remaining 25% fuelled by external sources comprising development agencies, governments and parliaments wishing to contribute to specific activities to promote democracy, human rights, gender equality and the like. An external funding ratio of 30%, if attained, would alleviate the burden on Member Parliaments while still remaining healthy enough to ensure the IPU's independence. The IPU was grateful for the sustained support of donors, the biggest being China, and also Sweden, which he was planning to visit in the near future with the aim of renewing the related agreement before it expired. Along with Irish Aid, the World Health Organization and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, other prominent donors included Canada, Qatar and Benin, which was helping to fund the IPU's counter-terrorism activities. Special tribute was due to Mr. Al Nuaimi for his work in support of the IPU's robust efforts to secure its funding base, which had culminated in a new contribution of US\$ 1 million from the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates for activities in the areas of peace, gender equality and climate change, with the Parliament of Bahrain potentially set to follow suit.

Mr. S.J.-C. Apithy (Benin), congratulating the Secretary General on his accomplishments and thanking him for highlighting the Beninese role in combating terrorism, asked whether the reported personnel costs, amounting to some 80% of total IPU expenditures, resembled those in comparable organizations, including the United Nations. Voluntary contributions notwithstanding, those costs appeared disproportionate to the amount remaining for the operational activities constituting the IPU's key mission.

The Secretary General said in response that, as well as permanent staff, the reported personnel costs included the specialized consultants and experts recruited to deliver to parliaments the services associated with the IPU's operational activities. The cost of administering the Organization therefore appeared higher than was the actual case. The IPU's permanent staff costs were, in fact, small compared with similar organizations and its service personnel costs also considerably less.

At the proposal of Ms. D. O'Neill (Australia), the Governing Council gave a round of applause in thanks to the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia for having taken on the important role of External Auditor.

The President, expressing gratitude to the Secretary General and his team for ensuring that the IPU's finances remained in good order, took it that the Governing Council wished to approve his financial administration of the IPU and the financial statements for 2023.

It was so decided.

Item 8 of the agenda

**QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND
THE SITUATION OF CERTAIN PARLIAMENTS**

a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU

The Secretary General said that there were currently no requests for affiliation or reaffiliation to the IPU but, as mentioned earlier, it was hoped that the participation of the President of the Senate of Jamaica in the current Assembly would lead to a Jamaican request for affiliation. Member Parliaments were encouraged to join in the efforts to bring as many other parliaments as possible into the IPU family, including from Caribbean countries such as Barbados and Belize.

The President, after confirming that discussions in that connection were under way with the Parliament of Belize and thanking the Speaker of Guyana and the Chairperson of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean for their support in the matter, took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of the reported efforts and developments.

It was so decided.

(b) Observer status
(CL/213/8(b)-P.1)

The Secretary General said that, following its examination of two requests for observer status submitted by the Permanent Conference of Political Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean (COPPPAL) and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), as set out in the annexes to document CL/213/8(b)-P.1, the Executive Committee had recommended that both requests be approved, taking into consideration the mandates and track records of the two entities, including in terms of their collaboration with the IPU.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to approve both requests.

It was so decided.

Item 9 of the agenda

REGIONAL OFFICES

The Secretary General, providing an update in connection with the decision taken to open two regional offices as pilot projects in Uruguay and Egypt, said that a host country agreement had been signed with Uruguay and that consultations were continuing with its Parliament to identify the human and other resources required to operationalize the regional office in Montevideo as soon as possible. Discussions were at an advanced stage concerning the host country and logistics agreements that the IPU hoped to conclude in the near future with the Egyptian authorities, which were endeavouring to accommodate IPU concerns so that the regional office in Cairo could also be opened as soon as possible.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of the update provided by the Secretary General.

It was so decided.

The sitting rose at 11:05.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 27 March 2024
(Morning)

The sitting was called to order at 09:10, with Dr. T. Ackson (United Republic of Tanzania), President of the IPU, in the Chair.

Item 8 of the agenda
(continued)

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND THE SITUATION OF CERTAIN PARLIAMENTS

(c) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General, accompanying with a digital slide presentation his overview of the situation of certain parliaments, starting with those that were non-functioning, said that the Executive Committee had examined recent developments in the two similar cases of Afghanistan and Myanmar, which had been taken over by, respectively, the Taliban and the military. Its recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation in both countries while also maintaining its solidarity with the elected Afghan Parliament in place at the time of the Taliban takeover and, in the case of Myanmar, with the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw – essentially an interim parliament in exile – by continuing to recognize the participation of both in IPU Assemblies as observers with non-voting rights.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that, in Haiti, which had no sitting parliament and no elections in sight, the situation had descended into chaos. The Executive Committee had deplored that state of affairs while expressing the hope nonetheless that constitutional rule could be swiftly restored. Its recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that, following positive developments in Guinea-Bissau in the form of elections and the establishment of a new parliament in 2023 after years of instability, the country's President had, within 12 months, taken the unconstitutional step of dissolving that parliament, which the IPU nonetheless continued to recognize. The People's National Assembly therefore retained its full membership of the Organization, with the Speaker of Guinea-Bissau accordingly heading a delegation to the current Assembly. Although the country's President had now reportedly decided to authorize the reopening of parliament, no confirmation of that happening had been received. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to engage with the People's National Assembly and provide necessary support.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, recalling in the case of Niger that its Parliament had been dissolved in 2023 following a military coup, said that the IPU had recently been advised to expect an imminent update concerning the planned establishment of a transitional parliament to oversee the country's shift to democratic rule. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation and strongly express its hope for a swift return to constitutional rule in Niger.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that similar hopes for a swift return to constitutional rule in Sudan, which was also without a parliament, had not materialized, with the country instead embroiled in a civil war. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation and keep in place Sudan's existing suspension from the IPU membership.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, moving on to the situation in countries with transitional parliaments, said that some of those countries had advanced more towards constitutional rule than others. In the case of Chad, elections were scheduled for the end of the transitional period in May 2024, signalling progress that should be encouraged to continue until the process was complete. In the interim, the IPU would continue to provide support to the country's Transitional National Council, including so as to prepare parliamentary staff for the advent of the new parliament.

In Burkina Faso, progress was also continuing, with work on a new constitution under way and the road map for a return to constitutional rule seemingly on track. As to Gabon, where there had been a coup d'état in August 2023, the IPU was continuing to monitor the situation, which he had furthermore been able to ascertain for himself during a visit to the country. The IPU was also set to respond to a request from the Gabonese Speaker for its support in the implementation of the elaborate road map now in place for a return to constitutional order, which included the drafting of a new constitution.

In Guinea and Mali, the transitional process also appeared to be on track. In the former, its new constitution, towards which the IPU had contributed ideas in the early drafting stages, was currently being finalized, while in the latter, a new constitution had been approved and signed by the country's President. In South Sudan, a road map for transition was being followed without cause for concern, despite some difficulties.

In all six cases, the Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should take note of the progress achieved and that the IPU should continue to work with the parliaments concerned, both individually and collectively, with a view to accelerating their transition to constitutional rule.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General added that, the previous day, a way forward had in fact been agreed with the heads of the delegations from the transitional parliaments in Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali concerning the IPU support that could be provided to each, taking into account their individual specificities as well as their similar political situations. The IPU therefore expected to initiate related activities in the coming days in addition to continuing the support already extended to some.

With regard to Libya, which was in a peculiar situation with its dual institutions, including two parliaments, only one of them recognized by the IPU, noteworthy progress had very recently been achieved with an agreement among the country's key political actors to work swiftly towards the organization of long-delayed presidential and parliamentary elections. The IPU would be monitoring the situation and expanding its existing outreach to prepare parliamentary staff for the advent of a new parliament. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the Governing Council should take note of the situation.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, turning to the category of parliaments working in environments that affected their capacity to function, recalled that, in the case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, known in recent years for its instability, the IPU had consistently expressed concern as to the conditions in place for free and fair elections while simultaneously working to normalize its relations

with the Venezuelan authorities. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that it should remain seized of the matter before revisiting it at its meeting in June 2024 with a view to fine-tuning the IPU stance in the light of those conditions, bearing in mind the expected presidential elections on the horizon.

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

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that Palestine and Yemen fell into that same category and that the dire situation in both cases was well known. With regard to Yemen, the IPU had signed a cooperation agreement with the country's House of Representatives on capacity-building for its parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should take note of and continue to monitor the situation in both countries.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eswatini, Peru and the Syrian Arab Republic still featured, as previously, in the final category of parliaments in countries where the political situation potentially threatened their capacity to function. Eswatini and Peru could perhaps be removed from that category, however, if the positive developments being seen in both continued until the 149th Assembly. Concerning the Syrian Parliament, it had long remained steadfast in its participation in IPU Assemblies, despite the exceptional circumstances in which it operated. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation in all four countries.

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

It was so decided.

Mr. A.N.L. Lushaba (Eswatini), referring to an ongoing court case in his country that the IPU had highlighted as a matter of concern, said that the IPU should refrain from taking any decisions relating to the situation of the Eswatini Parliament until the case proceedings were brought to a close with the sentencing of those found guilty of charges against them.

The President said in response that the IPU clearly had no intention of interfering in those proceedings; it was simply monitoring the situation of a member of its parliamentary family.

The Secretary General, clarifying further, said that the IPU had been monitoring the situation in Eswatini ever since the protests there in May 2021. It had now taken note of the national dialogue in progress and the fact that the envisaged governance reforms appeared to be back on track. The case mentioned related to three Eswatini former parliamentarians and was under consideration by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, which would be reporting on it under the relevant agenda item.

Item 10 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS (CL/213/10-P.1)

The Secretary General, drawing attention to the list of future inter-parliamentary meetings set out in document CL/213/10-P.1 and recalling that Uzbekistan had already been approved as the venue for the 150th Assembly, said that a subsequent IPU mission to Uzbekistan had been positively satisfied by the facilities in place at the venue in Tashkent and that the required host country agreement had consequently been signed the previous day. Concerning the 149th Assembly, as it had proved impossible to identify a potential host, the proposal now was that it should be held in Geneva. Funding had been secured for all the specialized and other meetings listed in the document, including those still to be approved, although hosts were still needed in the cases indicated in the document, with offers welcome. A number would be held online, thanks to digital technology, but it should be noted that the IPU always aimed to strike a judicious balance between virtual and in-person meetings.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the list of future inter-parliamentary meetings.

It was so decided.

The President said that the Executive Committee had put forward a suggestion that women parliamentarians should follow the example of young parliamentarians by annually organizing a global conference of their own. She took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the suggestion.

It was so decided.

The President said that the Executive Committee had also put forward a suggestion that it should meet on a minimum of one further occasion outside IPU Assemblies, ideally in June of each year, so as to expedite some of its work. She took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the suggestion.

It was so decided.

Item 11 of the agenda

SIXTH WORLD CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT
(CL/213/11-P.1)

The Secretary General, providing an update on preparations for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament to be held in late July or early August 2025, said that the composition of the related Preparatory Committee was as set out in document CL/213/11-P.1. In addition to nominated members of the geopolitical groups, it included representatives of the Executive Committee, a number of *ex-officio* members, and a representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General. The suggested dates for the first meeting of Preparatory Committee were 17 and 18 May 2024.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the dates mentioned and take note of the update provided.

It was so decided.

Item 12 of the agenda
(CL/213/12-R.1)

TASK FORCE ON THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia), Vice-President of the IPU Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, after reading out the report on the activities of the Task Force since October 2023, as contained in document CL/213/12-R.1, said that the Task Force remained committed to building bridges between the parties to the conflict in Ukraine. Despite the difficulties entailed and with the support and cooperation of Member Parliaments, it believed that it would ultimately succeed in forging the necessary dialogue.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation), expressing gratitude to the Task Force, said that his delegation stood ready to continue its communication and cooperation with the Task Force, which was the only reasonable approach to follow and was preferable, moreover, to the adoption of extremely biased resolutions. The Russian side had always stood similarly ready to engage in negotiations with Ukraine, but such negotiations were prohibited under Ukrainian law, posing a serious obstacle for the Task Force to overcome. In addition, the Ukrainian delegation to the IPU had an unfortunate tendency – as manifested only minutes earlier – to physically distance or absent itself during discussions that could pave a way forward to dialogue. Regrettably, that attitude appeared to be firmly backed by certain Western countries, which were irresponsibly and indeed foolishly prolonging the war by barring Ukraine from negotiating with the Russian Federation. A mission from the Task Force would be gladly received in Moscow.

Ms. M. Cederfelt (Sweden), recalling the immediate efforts made to end the aggressive and unprovoked Russian attack – in effect a full-scale war – on Ukraine in February 2022, said that the Task Force was engaged in important work, with a commendable humanitarian focus, and would hopefully succeed where those efforts had failed. She asked what the Task Force could do to help stop the ever-intensifying Russian bombing of civilian targets and power plants in Kyiv, Lviv and southern Ukraine, of which women and other vulnerable groups were the main victims.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) said that the Task Force shouldered a huge responsibility and was to be congratulated on its hard work. Dialogue and diplomacy were the first and last resorts when it came to resolving differences, to which war was never the answer. While direct negotiations between the Russian and Ukrainian sides had not as yet been possible, both had accepted the IPU as an intermediary, exemplifying its relevance and its role as a forum for dialogue. Each side must, however, be more open to working with the Task Force for an end to the conflict and, in turn, to the suffering of innocent people.

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia), Vice-President of the IPU Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, responding to the interventions, said that the Task Force was extremely grateful for the support from Member Parliaments for its efforts to seek the cooperation of both sides in the protracted conflict, which required thoughtfulness and sensitivity. In good faith and without underestimating the complexities involved, it pursued those efforts with the aim of facilitating communication and building mutual confidence. It looked forward to following up on the invitation for it to visit Moscow, which was a welcome development, and hoped that the willingness of both parties to take its work on board would lead to more concrete action towards resolving what was a difficult issue.

As to the bombing of civilian targets, the Task Force was very clear in its message that every effort must be made, with the assistance of UN agencies and others, to put a stop to such happenings and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. The Task Force greatly appreciated the instrumental role played by Mr. Pacheco during his IPU presidency in setting its mandate, which it would continue striving to fulfil as best it could.

The President, thanking the Task Force for its tremendous efforts and the Russian and Ukrainian delegations for their spirit of cooperation, said that the IPU would be working harder than ever to secure the return of children displaced by the conflict and that she stood ready to assist the work of the Task Force in any way necessary. She took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of the report on the activities of the Task Force.

It was so decided.

Item 13 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(CL/213/13-P.1-rev)

(a) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

(CL/213/13(a)-R.1 and R.2)

Ms. M.G.A. Odhiambo (President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), accompanying with a number of slides her presentation of the draft decisions prepared by the Committee at its recent session in Geneva, as contained in document CL/213/13(a)-R.2, said that she would present the cases concerned in alphabetical order.

Bangladesh

The Committee thanked the delegation of Bangladesh for the information provided at the hearing held during the current session and for the spirit of cooperation. It noted with appreciation that the Parliament of Bangladesh continued to monitor the case. However, it firmly believed that, almost 20 years after Mr. Kibria's assassination, the time had come for justice to be done in the case. It sincerely hoped that Parliament and the current ruling party, of which Mr. Kibria had been a prominent member, would take decisive action to facilitate the resolution of the matter and finally send a strong signal that the murder of a parliamentarian could not go unpunished.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Shah Ams Kibria.

Egypt

The Committee had again considered the case of the former Egyptian member of parliament, Mr. Mostafa al-Nagar, who had been missing for almost three years. The Committee regretted that the Egyptian House of Representatives had stopped responding to its requests for information since 2022.

The Committee remained convinced that the Egyptian State could make more efforts to locate Mr. al-Nagar, in particular by opening an investigation into his disappearance so that his family could finally find out what had become of him. The Committee also wished to receive the requested information regarding the court decisions adopted against Mr. al-Nagar and the criteria to be met for the authorities to initiate an investigation into the disappearance of individuals whose families had filed a complaint about their disappearance.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Mostafa al-Nagar.

Eswatini

The Committee had had a very constructive exchange in Geneva with the Eswatini delegation about the case of three former parliamentarians, two of whom had been held in detention on a number of charges since July 2021 in the aftermath of protests calling for democratic reforms in Eswatini. In 2023, the judge in the case had found them guilty of the most serious charges but had reserved sentencing for later. Both men risked spending 20 years in prison.

The Governing Council had before it, in document CL/213/13(a)-R.1, the latest report from the IPU trial observer. His and the Committee's own analysis of the verdict confirmed earlier concerns that the criminal cases brought against the parliamentarians had come in response to their actions to support political change. Indeed, the Committee was convinced that both men should never have been prosecuted in the first place. It sincerely hoped that the matter would still be resolved, in a way that was in line with applicable human rights standards, before the men were sentenced.

At the same time, the Committee remained keen to travel to Eswatini to discuss with the authorities and other stakeholders the issues that had emerged in the case. The Eswatini delegation had confirmed its willingness to help facilitate the organization of that mission.

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

Guinea-Bissau

The Committee had also examined a new collective case in Guinea-Bissau of four parliamentarians who had suffered violations of their human rights for publicly criticizing the President of the Republic. She first thanked the parliamentary authorities for the information provided during their hearing with the Committee.

The case included the situation of Mr. Marciano Indi, who had been abducted in 2020. Even though able to identify his kidnappers, no investigation had been carried out by the relevant authorities. In 2022, member of parliament Mr. Agnelo Regalla had been shot outside his home. His injuries were so serious that he had been rushed to Portugal for necessary treatment. A judicial inquiry had been opened, but no further action had been taken. In 2024, Mr. Bamba Banjai had been arrested and subjected to intense interrogation twice. Lastly, since the unconstitutional dissolution of parliament in December 2023, the President of the Assembly, Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, and all the other members of parliament had been deprived of their parliamentary mandate and continued to be prevented from entering parliament.

The Committee denounced those violations and urged the authorities in Guinea-Bissau to take all necessary steps to ensure that the violations suffered were properly investigated.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of four parliamentarians of Guinea-Bissau.

Israel

A new case had been referred to the Committee regarding the situation of Mr. Ofer Cassif, a member of the Knesset who had been subjected to an arbitrary expulsion procedure for publicly supporting the South African case against the State of Israel at the International Court of Justice.

The motion to expel Mr. Cassif had failed to pass in plenary, and he had been able to retain his parliamentary seat in the Knesset. For that reason, the Committee had decided to declare the case inadmissible as the basis of the original complaint had become moot.

However, the Committee found that the expulsion procedure had infringed upon Mr. Cassif's right to freedom of expression and hindered the legitimate exercise of his parliamentary mandate. The Committee called on the Israeli authorities to ensure that the rights of members of the Knesset, including their right to freedom of opinion and expression, were upheld and their parliamentary immunity was protected.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Ofer Cassif.

Kyrgyzstan

The Committee had recently declared admissible a complaint concerning Mr. Adakhan Madumarov, a former Speaker and leader of one of the main opposition parties in parliament.

In September 2023, while walking in the capital with his son, Mr. Madumarov had been arrested by special forces and later accused of treason over a matter dating back to 2009, ostensibly for signing the minutes of a diplomatic meeting on the disputed border with neighbouring Tajikistan. Since that time, Mr. Madumarov had spent seven months in prison, as all petitions for his release had been rejected.

The complainant reported that the trial of Mr. Madumarov and his continued detention were politically motivated and violated his rights to due process, his immunity and his parliamentary mandate.

The Committee thanked the Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan for answering its questions in a hearing during the current Assembly. However, the Committee was concerned by the grave allegations in the case and called on the authorities to free Mr. Madumarov and do their utmost to protect his rights. In that regard, the previous night, the Committee had been informed that Mr. Madumarov had been found guilty of the charges but received no sentence. He reportedly had to remain in prison until the criminal proceedings had been concluded, which was apparently unlawful. The Committee suggested to reflect that latest development in the draft decision.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Adakhan Madumarov.

Madagascar

The Committee had examined a new case in Madagascar, concerning member of parliament Mr. Fetra R. Razafitsimalona. She thanked the National Assembly of Madagascar for the written information provided, including the measures taken to ensure respect for the member of parliament's rights.

Mr. Razafitsimalona had been arrested in November 2023 during an unauthorized demonstration to protest against the lack of transparency in the presidential election. On the eve of the presidential election, the Malagasy Government had decided to ban all political demonstrations in public places by all parties except the re-elected president's party. The member of parliament had been charged with inciting the population to take part in unauthorized demonstrations in defiance of his parliamentary immunity. He had been released under judicial supervision and was awaiting his verdict, scheduled for 9 April 2024.

The Committee called on the judicial authorities to drop the charges against Mr. Razafitsimalona and hoped that the verdict to be handed down on 9 April 2024 would clear him of the charges against him, since they appeared to be based merely on the exercise of his fundamental rights.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Fetra R. Razafitsimalona.

Pakistan

The Committee was deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation of opposition members of parliament in Pakistan, with mounting allegations of arbitrary detention, inhumane treatment and violations of due process against four parliamentarians of the *Tehreek-e-Insaf* party, or PTI, including its chairperson, Mr. Imran Khan. It was particularly alarmed by reports of the deteriorating health of Mr. Khan and his colleagues, who remained in prison.

The Committee deplored that the authorities had not implemented the decision adopted by the Governing Council at the Assembly in Luanda urging them to free the detained members of parliament and allow them to take part in elections freely. The Committee deeply regretted that the political rights of the five members of parliament in the case had not been respected.

The Committee urged the Pakistani authorities to ensure that violations against their colleagues were not left unpunished and to make sure that such cases did not recur. It also hoped to finally be able to go to Pakistan to meet all parties and make progress towards the resolution of the growing number of cases in the country.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of five Pakistani parliamentarians.

Palestine/Israel

The Committee had examined the cases of Mr. Marwan Barghouti and Mr. Ahmad Sa'adat, two former Palestinian members of parliament, who were currently detained in Israel. They had been detained after unfair trials, as concluded by the legal expert appointed by the IPU in his 2003 report on Mr. Barghouti's trial and reported by several civil society organizations in the case of Mr. Sa'adat.

The Committee was deeply concerned about the recent information regarding the detention conditions of Mr. Barghouti and Mr. Sa'adat, including their reported torture and ill-treatment, their placement in solitary confinement and their restricted access to water and food inside Israeli prison.

The Committee urged the Israeli authorities to treat Mr. Barghouti and Mr. Sa'adat with respect for their inherent dignity and value as human beings, to prevent torture and other forms of ill-treatment and to investigate thoroughly the very serious allegations about their current treatment.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decisions relating to, respectively, the case of Mr. Marwan Barghouti and the case of Mr. Ahmad Sa'adat

Philippines

The Committee was presenting two draft decisions. The positive news was that former Senator de Lima had finally been released on bail in November 2023. Her trial had been riddled with irregularities and the prosecution's case had collapsed over time. In fact, a full analysis of her situation showed convincingly that she had been charged in response to her criticism of former President Duterte. The Committee trusted, therefore, that the only remaining charge pending against Ms. de Lima would now also finally be dismissed for lack of evidence.

With regard to the second case, which concerned a current parliamentarian, Ms. Castro, and a former parliamentarian, Ms. Elago, both had been vilified or worse, threatened by prominent figures within the political or military establishment. In fact, in October 2023, former President Duterte had made it clear on television that he thought that Ms. Castro should be killed. The Committee remained deeply concerned that a former president had made those remarks, which could put Ms. Castro's life in real danger, and called on the Prosecutor's Office to take the necessary action.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decisions relating to, respectively, the case of Ms. Leila de Lima and the cases of two Filipino parliamentarians.

Somalia

The Committee had received a new complaint alleging that Mr. Abdullahi Abib had faced death threats as a result of his oversight work in parliament. In addition, Mr. Abib had allegedly faced interference with his work within parliament, where he often addressed matters of corruption and human rights violations.

The Committee thanked the delegation of Somalia for the information provided in a meeting during the current Assembly. However, the Committee was concerned by the discrepancies between the account of the complainant and that of the authorities.

In light of the security risks faced by Mr. Abib and the numerous cases of murdered members of parliament in Somalia, the Committee called on the Somali authorities to do everything possible to protect the life and rights of Mr. Abib. The Committee also hoped to be able to rely on the cooperation of parliament to address the concerns in the case.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Adbullahi Hashi Abib.

Tunisia

With regard to Tunisia, she thanked the parliamentary authorities for their openness to dialogue with the Committee and for expressing their wish to collaborate with the Committee and the IPU. Although it had decided not to adopt any new decisions in the cases examined, the Committee had nevertheless expressed to the delegation its concerns about all the former Tunisian members of parliament. The Committee hoped that the Tunisian authorities would welcome it as part of a future mission to find lasting solutions to all the Tunisian cases under examination.

The Governing Council took note of the information provided.

Türkiye

The Committee had had a very fruitful exchange in Geneva with Ms. Fatma Oncu from the Turkish delegation. It was at a critical time; the Turkish Constitutional Court would soon decide on the fate of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP). The Committee trusted that, when it adopted its ruling, the Court would make the distinction between the HDP and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which was an armed guerrilla movement listed as a terrorist organization by numerous countries. Although the HDP and the PKK relied largely on the same support base and pursued similar objectives, the HDP was a legal political party that in no way advocated violence to achieve its goals. In that regard, the Committee remained concerned that 10 current and former parliamentarians continued to languish in prison on charges that it found hard to understand.

On a more positive note, the Committee understood that there had been some positive legislative reforms in the area of freedom of expression in Türkiye, although it believed that more needed to be done. It would gladly learn more about the current legal framework and about any other steps that were planned to bolster free speech.

Ms. F. Oncu (Türkiye) expressing a reservation on the entire report in respect of her country, said that her delegation would submit to the Committee in writing all information of relevance to the cases concerned.

The Governing Council adopted the draft decision relating to the cases of 68 Turkish parliamentarians, taking note of the reservation expressed by the Turkish delegation.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The Committee had been following the situation of more than 100 former parliamentarians in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for several years. It welcomed its recent exchanges with members of the National Assembly elected in 2020 and hoped to continue those discussions with all relevant stakeholders in the country to resolve the cases.

The Committee was deeply concerned by the 15-year ban from holding public office imposed on Ms. María Corina Machado. It believed that recent events should be seen as a continuation of actions by State institutions to restrict Ms. Machado's political rights, which had begun when she was a prominent opposition member of parliament.

With regard to the collective case, the Committee reiterated its long-standing position that the issues involved in the present case were part of the wider complex situation in Venezuela. It reiterated the IPU's willingness to support all efforts to strengthen democracy in Venezuela. The Committee invited the Venezuelan authorities to provide further information on how the IPU could best assist and to respond to its requests for information on the specific issues relating to the individual situations.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decisions relating to, respectively, the case of Ms. María Corina Machado and the cases of 135 Venezuelan parliamentarians.

Zimbabwe

The Committee was concerned by the escalating number of cases in Zimbabwe. It had received a new complaint from 18 members of parliament from the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) party claiming that their mandates had been revoked in an arbitrary manner. Some might recall from the report to the Luanda Assembly that 23 members of parliament from the CCC had had their seats revoked days after the start of their term. The new recalls brought the total number of CCC members of parliament who had lost their seats to 41.

According to the complaint, the Speakers of Parliament had once again acted on a fraudulent letter from an imposter claiming to act as the secretary general of the CCC while ignoring all communications coming from the members of parliament concerned. In addition, the Committee had been shocked to learn that none of those members of parliament were allowed to take part in by-elections in constituencies where they had been elected only months earlier.

The Committee deplored that the authorities did not see fit to implement the decision adopted by the Governing Council in Luanda to review the revocation procedure that had led to the initial complaint. While the Committee appreciated that such a procedure was contained in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, its view was that constitutional norms should safeguard the rights of members of parliament, not impede on them. It firmly believed that those opposition parliamentarians should never have lost their seats and renewed its call on the authorities to consider modifying the procedure to ensure that all members of parliament could carry out their mandate freely.

Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), expressing reservations on the report and noting that the Parliament of Zimbabwe was constituted in accordance with Article 3 of the IPU Statutes, said that he had faithfully complied with the Committee's request to submit a detailed report to it on the cases concerned and had also appended to his report the related court judgments. It was clear from Article 129(1)(k) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe that no presiding officer of the National Assembly or Senate was responsible for investigating any political confusion in an opposition party and that, consequently, they would do no more than read any correspondence received. CCC leader Nelson Chamisa claimed to have sent a letter to parliament, approximately one month before the incident in question, in which he had stated that the only correspondence to be entertained should come from him, whereas the so-called imposter CCC secretary general had submitted a letter to parliament five days before that time. The CCC had since taken no legal or other steps to validate the latter's membership of the party or indeed concerning its leadership structure following Mr. Chamisa's resignation. Furthermore, no members of parliament from the ruling or opposition parties had indicated any desire to debate a motion that had been tabled for a review of Article 129(1)(k) of the Constitution, which was not the job of parliament. For the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to continue giving consideration to one side of the story after it had received his detailed report, including case law, was frivolous and vexatious.

Regarding the allegations of parliamentarians being subjected to violence, he had spent well over two hours on the day of the incident calling in vain for order in the House, following which the police had been summoned, in accordance with the standing orders and rules in place, to assist in removing the instigators of the chaos from the premises so that parliament could proceed with its work. The individuals concerned, moreover, had produced no medical reports in support of their claims to have suffered harsh treatment and resulting injury.

All political parties in Zimbabwe and indeed the then Prime Minister, opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, had voted in favour of the country's current Constitution. Mr. Tsvangirai had in fact been the first to recall parliamentarians – 28 of them in all. Curiously, however, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had never queried that action of his. The Parliament of Zimbabwe was prepared to receive a mission from the Committee, provided that the mission's intentions were clearly defined. As far as it was concerned, it had acted in conformity with the country's Constitution.

The Governing Council adopted the draft decision relating to the cases of 41 Zimbabwean parliamentarians, taking note of the reservations expressed by the Zimbabwean delegation.

Ms. M.G.A. Odhiambo (President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), said that she had presented only some of the numerous cases before the Committee. It was evident from the record growing number of cases in all regions that being a parliamentarian could be truly dangerous. The Committee counted on Member Parliaments' support in its efforts to help colleagues under threat.

Lastly, with reference to the long-standing case of Mr. Ousmane Sonko of Senegal, which the Committee had not formally considered during its recent session, the positive news was that Mr. Sonko had recently been released from prison, for which she thanked Senegal and also congratulated it on its successful elections.

The President, thanking the Committee for its excellent work, said that it could be assured of every assistance in its endeavour to close the cases before it and secure compliance with the law in the countries concerned.

(b) Forum of Women Parliamentarians
(CL/213/13(b)-R.1)

Ms. F. Ilimi Haddouche (Algeria), First Vice-President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report on the 37th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians held on 23 and 27 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(b)-R.1, said that, in examining from a gender perspective the draft resolution on *Addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapons systems and artificial intelligence*, into which the Forum's proposed amendments had since been inserted, participants had called for urgent action to remove the gender-related norms and biases incorporated into artificial intelligence algorithms, include women in all related decision-making processes, and encourage girls and women to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In a panel discussion *Women peacebuilders advancing sustainable peace*, participants had concluded that such peace depended on women's equal participation as peacebuilders and peacekeepers, with their inclusion in post-conflict reconstruction processes similarly essential to justice and full reparation. In a further debate, participants had underscored the elimination of discrimination as a means of transforming economic losses into gains, welcoming in that connection the participation of male parliamentarians in sharing good practices and recent reforms aimed at advancing women's economic empowerment.

The President said that the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians had elected Ms. Z. Mashaba of Eswatini to represent the African Group until March 2025 in place of Ms. Bujela, who was no longer a parliamentarian. The second vacancy, for the Arab Group, would be filled during the Bureau's next sitting. She took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(c) Forum of Young Parliamentarians
(CL/213/13(c)-R.1)

Mr. D. Carden (United Kingdom), President of the Board of the Forum of the Young Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the Forum's meeting held on 24 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(c)-R.1, said that participants had been updated on positive developments in the promotion of youth participation in parliaments but were saddened by the violence to which young parliamentarians could be subjected, which was a deterrent to such participation and an impediment to healthy democracy. In considering from a youth perspective the theme of the General Debate on parliamentary diplomacy, participants had highlighted the readiness of young parliamentarians to lead and engage in peace processes as a prerequisite for lasting peace. The Forum had also identified a member to prepare a youth overview of a draft resolution on artificial intelligence to be developed at the 149th Assembly and agreed on youth education and employment as the topic of focus for the upcoming Tenth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians. Meanwhile, it would continue promoting youth voices, rights and freedoms and bringing the fresh youth perspective that was critical to a modernized parliamentary diplomacy for sustainable peace.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(d) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/213/13(d)-R.1)

Mr. H.-J. Talsma (Netherlands), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, presenting the report of the Committee's three meetings in February and March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(d)-R.1, said that the Committee's activities were driven by its overarching goal of a durable Israeli-Palestinian peace, which now had a new urgency. It had heard from members on both sides of the conflict, who each favoured a mission to the region to better inform the Committee's work. Having received two successive updates from the main UN agency in Gaza on developments in

the situation, members had emphasized the need for continued delivery of critical aid to Palestinians and for action to address the trauma disproportionately affecting children in particular. Members had also regretted the inability of the Assembly to adopt an emergency item on Gaza for the second time, despite the overwhelming consensus on issues such as an immediate ceasefire, hostage release, humanitarian access and respect for international law. The Committee would continue to explore avenues for harnessing parliamentary diplomacy to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and find common political ground for ending hostilities.

Mr. N. Muthanna (Iraq), stressing that legitimate acts of resistance could not be described under international law as acts of aggression, said that Israel was a usurper and aggressor that practised genocide and apartheid. The current situation had not begun on 7 October 2023 but rather decades earlier with mass killing, occupation and forced displacement, now followed by deliberate slaughter of women and children and destruction of hospitals and infrastructure. Denounced even by many Jewish people, such massacres harmed the whole of humanity. The war was not one of Hamas versus Israel but one of all Palestinians seeking an end to occupation. South Africa was to be thanked for recognizing the moral and legal duty to take the situation to the International Court of Justice, in which it was supported by the majority of parliaments. The Israeli occupation threatened international peace and security and must end, with the blame for the conflict directed at the State engaged in racism, genocide, apartheid and collective crime and not at those who resisted occupation.

Mr. H.-J. Talsma (Netherlands), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, taking note of those comments, said that the Committee, including its esteemed member from Iraq, was fully aware of the historical background to the conflict. IPU Member Parliaments could be assured that, in conducting its work, the Committee would continue to take that background into account

The President, commending the Committee on its work and commitment, said that both she and the IPU Secretariat stood ready to assist it in any way possible, including in connection with its intended visit to Israel and Palestine. Concerning its membership, the Governing Council was called upon to elect one man and two women to fill the current vacancies in the composition of the Committee, which reflected a diverse geopolitical representation. Committee members were, however, elected in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their respective parliaments or geopolitical groups. Its current members were from Botswana, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, the Netherlands, Palestine, Switzerland, Türkiye, Uruguay and Zambia. As there were two candidates for the one vacancy for a man, namely Mr. B.O. Kalu of Nigeria and Mr. L.-J. de Nicolaÿ of France, a vote by show of hands would be necessary.

Following an explanation of the allocation of votes, a vote by show of hands was taken.

Number of votes obtained:

<i>Mr. B.O. Kalu (Nigeria)</i>	36
<i>Mr. L.-J. de Nicolaÿ (France)</i>	62

Having obtained the required majority, Mr. L.-J. de Nicolaÿ (France) was elected as a member of the Committee on Middle East Questions.

Ms. T. Vardanyan (Armenia), noting that there were candidates from the Middle East region for the two remaining vacancies for women, said that she wished to withdraw her candidacy and support the candidate from the United Arab Emirates.

The President said that another of the original four candidates for those two vacancies had also withdrawn, leaving only two candidates, Ms. M. Aljaghoub of Jordan and Ms. S. Falaknaz of the United Arab Emirates. She took it that the Governing Council wished to elect the two candidates as members of the Committee.

It was so decided.

The President also took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(e) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/213/13(e)-R.1)

Ms. D. O'Neill (Australia), member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, presenting the report of the Committee's meeting held on 26 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(e)-R.1, said that the Committee's review of specific areas of humanitarian concern had focused on the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan, as detailed in the report. It invited Member Parliaments to support the Operation Snow Leopard initiative to evacuate at-risk Afghans and to raise awareness of the situations in the latter two countries as well as urge support for humanitarian assistance efforts in both. With 2024 marking important anniversaries of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the instruments relating to statelessness and anti-personnel mines, the Committee also encouraged Member Parliaments to promote the universalization and strong enforcement of each and to enhance their implementation by revising, as necessary, the related national legal frameworks. Lastly, it invited Member Parliaments to highlight the negative implications of non-respect of those critical instruments and to advocate strict compliance with international humanitarian law.

The President said with respect to the Committee's membership that two of the three existing vacancies were to be filled by the Eurasia Group and one by the Asia-Pacific Group. Only one candidacy had been received for the former – that of Ms. Hakobyan of Armenia – along with that of Mr. Suebsang of Thailand for the latter. One vacancy therefore remained to be filled by the Eurasia Group. In the meantime, she took it that the Governing Council wished to elect the two existing candidates as Committee members.

It was so decided.

The President also took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(f) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/213/13(f)-R.1)

Ms. N.B.K. Mutti (Zambia), member of the Gender Partnership Group, presenting the report of the Group's 49th session on 24 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(f)-R.1, and citing figures set out in the report and its annexes, said that the strong participation of women in the 148th Assembly, including the highest-ever number attending an in-person Assembly, was encouraging but could be bettered, as shown at the 143rd and 144th Assemblies. Commendable progress was being made towards the objective of zero single-sex delegations, as indicated by the list of gender-balanced delegations annexed to the report, whose example others were encouraged to follow. Concerning the IPU's new anti-harassment policy, its roll-out in Geneva was a proud moment for the Group, which looked forward to further initiatives to secure a safe and respectful environment for all. As part of its continuing support for parliaments with few women members, the Group had constructively engaged in Geneva with the delegation of Sri Lanka, where it hoped to see women's political participation strengthened through measures such as a one-third quota for women. The Group stood ready to support all parliamentary efforts to promote such participation.

The President said that the Executive Committee had designated Ms. Mikayilova of Azerbaijan and Mr. Almodóbar of Spain to serve as members of the Gender Partnership Group. She took it that the Governing Council wished to approve their membership of the Group.

It was so decided.

The President also took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(g) Advisory Group on Health
(CL/213/13(g)-R.1)

Ms. L. Clifford-Lee (Ireland), President of the Advisory Group on Health, after reading out the report of the Group's meeting held on 23 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(g)-R.1, said in conclusion that the Group welcomed the IPU's recent signature of a new memorandum of

understanding with the World Health Organization (WHO) to further strengthen their long-standing partnership and was also pleased by the IPU's ongoing collaboration with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(h) Group of Facilitators for Cyprus
(CL/213/13(h)-R.1)

Mr. L. Wehrli (Switzerland), after reading out the report of the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus of its meeting held on 23 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(h)-R.1, said in conclusion that the IPU had reiterated its willingness to provide further assistance in connection with the much-needed confidence-building measures.

The President said that the candidacy of Mr. H. Arshakyan of Armenia for the role of facilitator had been received. She took it that the Governing Council wished to elect the candidate to that role.

It was so decided.

The President also took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(i) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG)
(CL/213/13(i)-R.1)

Mr. M. Karlsson (Sweden), Chairperson of the High-Level Advisory Group (HLAG) on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, after detailing the discussions described in the report of the 16th HLAG meeting held on 23 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(i)-R.1, recalled that the HLAG's core missions included promoting information about best practices and working proactively for national implementation of IPU and UN resolutions on counter-terrorism. All Member Parliaments were therefore urged to ensure that their respective States implemented those resolutions and to keep themselves continuously updated on good practices and new legislation adopted by parliaments elsewhere. An excellent tool for that purpose was the IPU-CTVE application, which included an interactive map of parliamentary counter-terrorism committees and access to, among other things, national legal frameworks, the international database on counter-terrorism legislation, and the Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime, or SHERLOC, portal. Members should also ensure that their countries regularly updated any information that they provided to the application. For the sake of their children and grandchildren, parliamentarians should work together to eliminate as soon as possible the sinister violence of terrorism often deliberately targeted at the most innocent and defenceless.

The President said that the Governing Council was called upon to elect three HLAG members to serve a four-year term ending in March 2028. Two candidacies had been received, namely those of Mr. E. Mulembwe of Mozambique for the African Group and Ms. R. Garvey of Ireland for the Twelve Plus Group. She took it that the Governing Council wished to elect the two candidates as HLAG members, along with the candidate to be identified in due course by the Eurasia Group.

It was so decided.

The President also took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

(j) Working Group on Science and Technology
(CL/213/13(j)-R.1)

Mr. D. Naughten (Ireland), Chairperson of the Working Group on Science and Technology, presenting the report of the Group's meetings held on 22 January and 25 March 2024, as contained in document CL/213/13(j)-R.1, said that Member Parliaments were invited to provide feedback on the draft IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology with a view to its adoption at the 149th Assembly and to complete the survey on understanding their use of scientific research so that their needs could be identified. In addition to the activities and projects detailed in the report, the Group would be supporting the IPU's ongoing work on artificial intelligence and, by pursuing such topics as human security and neurotechnology, the endeavours of the HLAG and the Advisory Group

on Health. It was also poised to issue a practical guide to support parliamentarians in their engagement with science and academia, to which parliaments were invited to contribute their experiences. The Group believed that science was most effective when prioritizing the interests of humanity through collaboration and inclusivity, as underscored by its decision following developments around the field trip described in the report.

The President said that the Governing Council was called upon to elect three members of the Working Group for a four-year term ending in March 2028. Two candidacies had been received, namely those of Ms. M. Seymour of the Bahamas for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) and Ms. M. Cederfelt of Sweden for the Twelve Plus Group. She took it that the Governing Council wished to elect the two candidates as members of the Working Group.

It was so decided.

The President also took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the report presented.

It was so decided.

Item 14 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/213/14-R.1)

The President said that one member was to be elected to the Executive Committee to replace Ms. I.K.N. Sabangu of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who was no longer a parliamentarian, and that the African Group had nominated Ms. I. Kitwa Godalena to continue her mandate. She took it that the Governing Council wished to elect the candidate as a member of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The President, after congratulating Ms. Kitwa Godalena and expressing confidence in her ability to discharge her duties as a member of the Executive Committee, said that she wished to pay tribute to former Executive Committee member Ms. P. Krairiksh of Thailand, whose term had ended during the 147th Assembly in Luanda.

Ms. Krairiksh was presented with a certificate of appreciation for her contribution and dedication to the work of the Executive Committee and the IPU in general.

The President said that, from among its members, the Executive Committee had elected as Vice-Presidents of the IPU Mr. A. Kharchi for the African Group, Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi for the Arab Group, Ms. A. Sarangi for the Asia-Pacific Group, Ms. S. Mikayilova for the Eurasia Group, Ms. B. Argimón for GRULAC, and Ms. D.-T. Avgerinopoulou for the Twelve Plus Group. She took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the election of each of those individuals.

It was so decided.

Item 15 of the agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(CL/213/15-R.1)

The President, introducing the item, said that oral and video presentations would be made on the specialized meetings listed in document CL/213/15-R.1, which also contained links to more detailed information available on each meeting via the IPU website.

Mr. A.S.K. Bagbin (Ghana), reporting on the WHO-IPU African Parliamentary High-Level Conference on Strengthening Health Security Preparedness held in Accra from 8 to 10 November 2023, said that participants had developed a vision for a strengthened regional health emergency preparedness policy and reaffirmed their commitment to aligning laws and policies with the International Health Regulations and to preparing their national legal frameworks for incorporation of the new pandemic, preparedness and response accord, once finalized. They had also encouraged

parliaments to increase financing for health security, allocate budgetary funding for improving health infrastructure and training health workers, and tackle barriers to health services. The importance of trust-building to address misinformation around disease outbreaks and preventive and response measures had been underlined, along with continued information-sharing and parliamentary capacity-building.

Ms. M. Al Suwaidi (United Arab Emirates), reporting on the main Parliamentary Meeting held on 6 December 2023, on the occasion of the 28th session of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, said that the record participation signalled the deep commitment of IPU Member Parliaments to addressing climate change and advancing the Paris Agreement. The unprecedented holding of the meeting in the Green Zone also strongly indicated the importance of parliaments in shaping collective action to those ends. The rich discussions had covered key climate issues, including adaptation, financing, loss and damage, and parliamentary oversight, with the inclusion of frontline States and the role of women and young parliamentarians in climate action deemed critical. The outcome document served as a road map for accelerating such action, both domestically and globally, for a more sustainable planet.

A video on the Parliamentary Meeting at COP28 was screened.

Mr. F. Fakafanua (Tonga), reporting on a special round table *How can women and young parliamentarians make the difference in climate governance*, held in the exclusive Blue Zone at COP28, also on 6 December 2023, said that the interactive event had been initiated by young parliamentarians seeking to prioritize links with youth groups on climate action. Participants had applauded parliaments for promoting the inclusion of youth negotiators in official delegations, reaffirmed the importance of working with scientific and research institutions for an evidence-based approach to climate policies, and recommitted to collaborating with women's and youth groups to ensure that governments fulfilled their climate undertakings. Also highlighted was the pivotal role of parliamentarians as key allies in the fight, with the women and youth among them at the forefront – hopefully setting a new precedent for the future.

Mr. L.-J. de Nicolaÿ (France), reporting on the Third Regional Seminar on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for the Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group, held in Paris from 18 to 19 January 2024, said that the seminar had begun with three round tables on sustainable development and ecological transition, equal opportunities and resilient health systems, and open parliaments and innovation and ended with a round-table discussion, followed by two field visits, focused on the link between the Olympic and Paralympic Games and sustainable development. With the SDGs at risk of being left aside at a time of systemic crises, especially in health care, participants had discussed actions for overcoming challenges to their implementation, closely associated with the fight against climate change, and urged constant parliamentary pressure for their achievement before it was too late.

A video on the annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, held in New York from 8 to 9 February 2024, was screened, followed by videos on the Abu Dhabi Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization, held in Abu Dhabi on 25 February 2024, and the Parliamentary Meeting on the theme "Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty", held in New York on 12 March 2024 to coincide with the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of the reports on recent IPU specialized meetings.

It was so decided.

Item 16 of the agenda

THE CREMER-PASSY PRIZE
(CL/213/16-P.1)

The President, introducing the item, said that 2024 marked the third edition of the Cremer-Passy Prize, awarded to parliamentarians having made an outstanding contribution to the defence and promotion of the IPU's objectives and to a more united, peaceful, sustainable and equitable world.

A video trailer for the 2024 Cremer-Passy Prize was screened.

The Secretary General said that the 2024 edition of the Prize was to be awarded to a parliamentarian with an exceptional record in the area of the IPU priority theme for the year, namely peace and security. The geopolitical groups were encouraged to submit without delay their nominations for one candidate and one alternate candidate by the deadline of 30 April 2024, using the application form available on the IPU website, a link to which was provided among the details set out in document CL/213/16-P.1. The selected jury would thereafter examine the applications and announce the winner at the 149th Assembly in October 2024.

The President said that the prompt submission of applications was likewise encouraged by the Executive Committee, which had also considered a proposal for the IPU to continue its previous involvement in the World Future Council's Future Policy Award. She took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the Executive Committee's recommendation that the IPU should indeed continue that involvement, albeit on a smaller scale than previously so as to give due prominence to its own Cremer-Passy Prize.

It was so decided.

Item 17 of the agenda

OTHER BUSINESS

The President, announcing the well-deserved retirement of IPU Conference Services Officer Ms. Sally-Anne Sader after 32 years of service to the IPU, said that Ms. Sader was the engine behind the success of IPU Assemblies and thanked her for all her years of service.

The Secretary General, paying tribute to Ms. Sader on behalf of all his colleagues, said that she was an exceptional person whom he had known throughout her career with the Organization. She was demonstrably selfless and loyal, fully committed to the IPU and always ready with a helping hand for colleagues and delegates alike. Initially joining as a Bilingual Secretary in 1992, she had in her current position been instrumental in the organization of 61 IPU Assemblies – making preparatory visits in that connection to a total of 55 countries – in addition to all five World Conferences of Speakers of Parliament and numerous specialized IPU meetings. She had also been involved in the introduction of innovative practices in response to developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when she had crucially helped to organize an extraordinary session of the Governing Council, including the online election of an IPU President. Ms. Sader was a foremost example of someone who had risen through the ranks by dint of hard work and self-development, both personal and professional, and would be sorely missed.

To vigorous applause from the Governing Council and the IPU Secretariat, Ms. Sader was presented with a souvenir in appreciation of her years of service to the Organization.

Ms. S.-A. Sader (Conference Services Officer, IPU) said that she had enjoyed every moment of her work for what was a wonderful organization with fantastic colleagues. She had met people from all over the world and appreciated the messages of good wishes received in advance of her impending retirement. She wished all the best to the Organization for the future.

The President declared the 213rd session of the Governing Council closed.

The sitting rose at 13:10.