

Cooperation with the United Nations system

List of activities undertaken by the IPU from 15 September 2017 to 15 March 2018

*Noted by the IPU Governing Council at its 202nd session
(Geneva, 28 March 2018)*

Democracy and Human Rights

The IPU continued to contribute to the UN process for a Global Compact for Migration that would conclude with a major conference in December 2018. The IPU President led a delegation to a Stocktaking Meeting to recap UN migration debates over the year from 4 to 6 December in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. On 11 December, the Head of the Office of the Permanent Observer to the UN in New York participated in a panel discussion at the United Nations on the political and civil rights of migrants and refugees. Members of parliament participated in UN multi-stakeholder hearings held on 18 December and 21 February.

The joint UN-IPU 2018 Parliamentary Hearing, also on migration, was held on 22 and 23 February in New York. Some 200 parliamentarians participated, along with high level UN officials, ambassadors and experts. The President of the UN General Assembly was actively involved in the preparation and running of the Hearing, the outcome of which will be shared with the UN membership as a document of the UN General Assembly and a formal contribution to the process on the Global Compact for Migration.

The second edition of the IPU-UNDP Global Parliamentary Report, entitled *Parliamentary oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account*, was launched during the 137th Assembly in St. Petersburg. The report was presented to a group of UN ambassadors (friends of the IPU) during a luncheon event on 28 November in New York. The IPU and UNDP are actively encouraging parliaments to use the report as a basis for reviewing their oversight performance, notably with regard to parliament's role in monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNDP and the IPU continued their joint project of assistance to the Parliament of Myanmar. The two organizations also continued their collaboration in support of the Parliaments of Djibouti and Georgia, and began collaboration in support of the parliament of Vanuatu.

The IPU Secretary General addressed the high-level segment of the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council, and underscored the work carried out by the IPU and its Member Parliaments in the promotion of democracy and human rights, including in terms of mobilizing parliamentary involvement in the Universal Periodic Review of human rights commitments.

Gender equality

A special launch event of the new iKNOW Politics website took place at the IPU's New York Office on 29 November. iKNOW Politics is an online platform to support women in politics, a joint initiative of the IPU, UN Women, UNDP and International IDEA. The event marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and focused on violence against women in politics.

On the same topic, the IPU was a collaborating partner of an Expert Group Meeting organized by UN Women and OHCHR and convened by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (SRVAW), in view of her upcoming 2018 UN General Assembly Report (73rd session) on the issue of violence against women in politics. The Meeting took place on 8 and 9 March in New York.

On 13 March 2018, the IPU and UN Women held their annual parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on the theme of the empowerment of rural women and girls. The IPU held two other side events of the CSW to highlight women issues.

The IPU pursued its collaboration with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee). It provided the Committee with information on the countries up for review at its 68th and 69th sessions (October-November 2017 and February-March 2018) in Geneva. The IPU also met with the Committee's CEDAW-IPU Working Group on both occasions in order to discuss how to further strengthen parliaments' ability to advance gender equality.

Youth empowerment

A delegation of MPs from the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU participated in the annual Youth Forum of the UN Economic and Social Council on 30 and 31 January. The Forum's main theme was the role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities.

On 17 and 18 November, the IPU held the fourth edition of its annual Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Ottawa. The Conference was hosted by the Parliament of Canada. The UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the President of the UN General Assembly delivered video messages focusing on the theme of the Conference: Young parliamentarians as drivers of inclusion. Representatives from the ILO and UNAIDS also took part as panellists during the event.

On 27 and 28 September, the IPU also organized the Regional Conference of Young Parliamentarians of Africa on the subject of enhancing political participation for more inclusive and peaceful societies. Focusing on political empowerment and the prevention of violent extremism, the young MPs were joined by representatives from UNICEF, UNDP, OHCHR and UNODC, who took part as panellists during various sessions.

International peace and security

A representative of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office participated in an event on *Sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development* on 18 October, during the 137th Assembly.

The IPU Standing Committees on UN Affairs and on Peace and International Security held a joint event on 16 October, during the 137th Assembly, to discuss the newly minted UN Nuclear Prohibition Treaty. The Chair of the preparatory conference for the treaty, Ambassador Whyte-Gomez of Costa Rica, was among the presenters. The treaty specifically invites parliamentarians to be engaged in this important process.

In mid-December, the UN General Assembly's annual resolution on inter-religious dialogue included a paragraph welcoming the IPU Declaration on *Promoting cultural pluralism and peace through interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue*, which was adopted at the 137th Assembly, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation.

On 5 and 6 February 2018, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) participated in the first meeting of the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism and presented its expertise in the subject matter. Since 2015, UNODC and the IPU have been working closely on an IPU-UNODC Joint-Programme, which aims to bridge the significant gaps in the implementation of IPU and UN counter-terrorism resolutions. The High-Level Advisory Group was established to guide the Member-driven plan of action of the Joint-Programme.

Sustainable development

During this period, the IPU participated actively in several working group meetings of the Global Partnership for Development Cooperation (GPEDC), which includes UNDP. Work on a joint IPU-UNDP Guidance note for MPs on development cooperation proceeded with two drafts prepared during the first quarter of 2018.

The UN Secretary-General's second report on *Repositioning of the UN development system*, issued in January, contained provisions for UN engagement with parliaments.

The IPU provided support to the Global Accountability Report of the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), helping secure the participation of a number of parliaments in the survey exercise leading up to the report. Preparations got underway to engage parliamentarians in the biannual ministerial meeting of the DCF in May 2018.

The IPU and the UN Environment Programme agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding that sets priorities for cooperation until the end of 2020. At the time of writing, the MoU was in its final stages before signature. The MoU prioritizes the SDGs related to climate change and the environment and focuses on building capacity in parliaments to legislate and oversee the implementation of laws and policies. The MoU is expected to be signed by the heads of the two organizations in the coming weeks. The two organizations are also working on producing a background paper for parliamentarians on the green economy.

The IPU and UNDP continued to support SDG self-assessments in parliaments through the IPU-UNDP SDG Self-Assessment Toolkit. During the reporting period the parliaments of Serbia, Fiji, Mali, Kenya and Djibouti came up with action plans to set up institutional arrangements and mainstream the SDGs in their work.

Senior-level interaction

The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Mr. Yury Fedotov, represented the UN Secretary-General at the opening of the 137th Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, on 14 October. During the Assembly, the former Chief of Staff to two Presidents of the General Assembly, Ambassador T. Christensen, participated in a panel discussion of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs on *The role of the UN General Assembly in international governance* on 18 October.

On 13 November, the IPU President met with the Assistant UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Volker Türk, and discussed the need for the IPU to develop more fieldwork in order to address the legislative challenges in terms of nationality laws. They also talked about the need to conduct more field missions and UNHCR proposed different places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Zambia.

The President of the UN General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, sent a video message to the opening session of the Fourth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians on 17 November in Ottawa, Canada. The conference was organized in cooperation with the Parliament of Canada.

On 27 November, the UN-IPU annual senior leadership meeting took place at UN Headquarters in New York. Co-chaired by the IPU Secretary General and the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, the meeting helped clarify a number of coordination issues at national and global levels. It recommended, among other things, that a working-level meeting should take place each year in advance of the senior leadership meeting.

The IPU President requested a personal meeting with Ms. Mohammed to introduce herself. The discussions delved into the IPU's willingness to work in a coordinated manner with the United Nations, in particular regarding the SDGs, and women and youth empowerment, which was of great importance to parliaments and countries.

Also on 27 November, the IPU Secretary General met with the Administrator for UNDP, Mr. Achim Steiner, to officially sign a new Memorandum of Understanding which sets the priorities and institutional parameters for further cooperation between the two organizations.

On 28 November, 21 Permanent Representatives attended the Group of Friends of the IPU luncheon hosted by the IPU Secretary General. The event marked the beginning of the consultative process for a UN General Assembly resolution on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU, expected in May 2018.

On 13 December, the IPU President met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. She reaffirmed the IPU's commitment to protect and defend the human rights of parliamentarians. She also extended an invitation to him to participate in the 138th Assembly and requested his support for carrying out workshops that could provide in-depth information and tools to allow parliamentarians to improve the policy frameworks on human rights in every country.

The IPU President and the Vice-President of the Executive Committee held a meeting in mid-December with the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Mr. Michael Møller. They discussed existing cooperation and explored further avenues for the future, particularly regarding the SDGs. They proposed to organize a workshop for the Chairs of Foreign Affairs and Finance Committees of all IPU Member Parliaments to offer practical information for better implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

At a stock-taking meeting on the Global Compact for Migration held in Puerto Vallarta in December, the IPU President met with the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ambassador William Lacy Swing, and extended to him an invitation to address the 138th Assembly.

On 22 February, the IPU President and Secretary General met with the United Nations Secretary-General, and discussed parliamentary action on some of the principal issues on the international agenda, as well as opportunities to further strengthen the partnership between the IPU and the United Nations. They underscored the critical role and responsibility of parliaments in achieving the SDGs, particularly in terms of ratification, adjustment of the national legislation, budget allocation and accountability to make the Goals feasible at the local level. The IPU President invited Mr. Guterres to the 139th Assembly, to which he replied favourably.