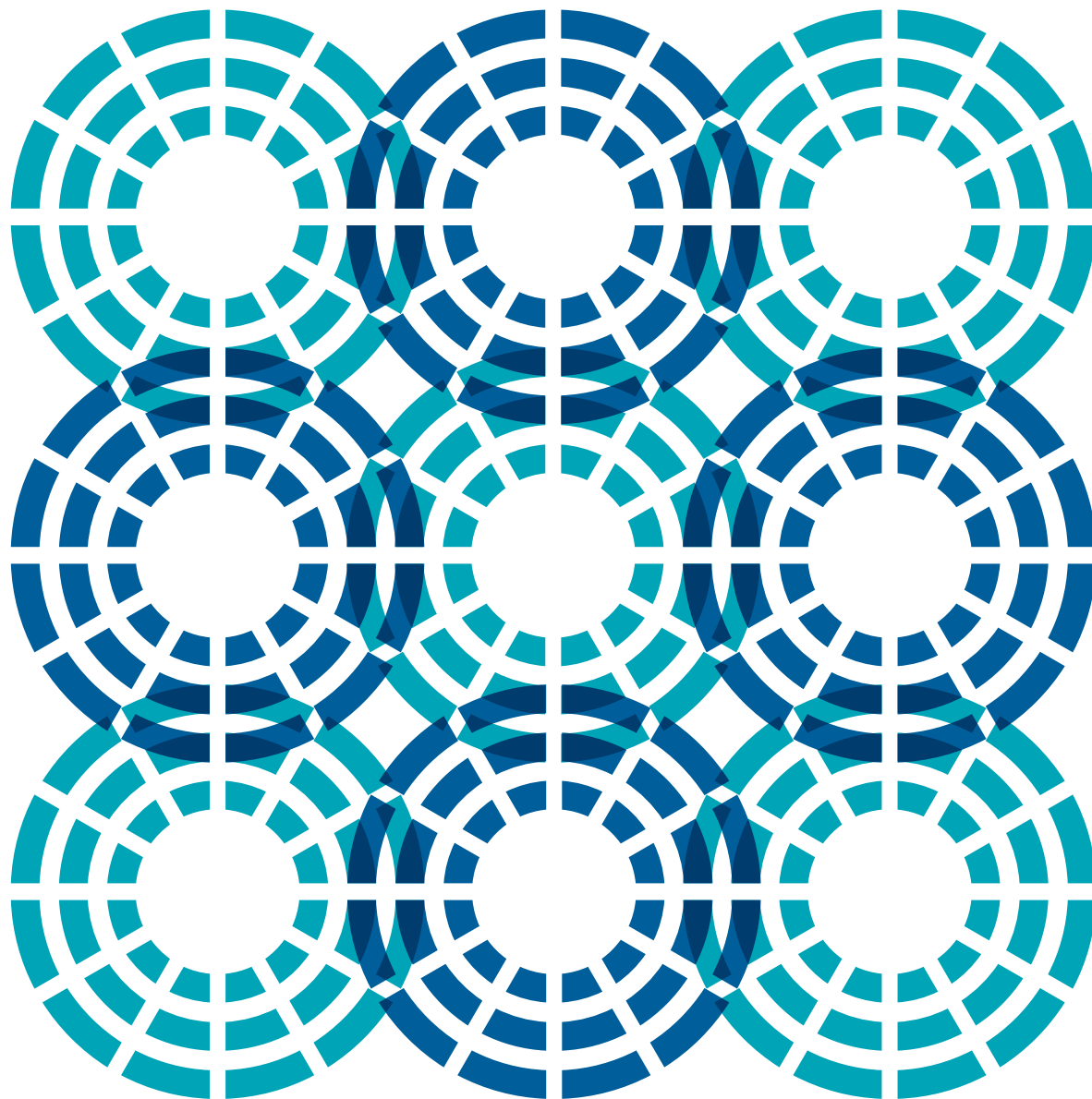




Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Celebrating 130 years of the IPU Anniversary Book



What is the IPU?

The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. It was founded 130 years ago as the first multilateral political organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations. Today, the IPU comprises 179 national Member Parliaments and 13 regional parliamentary bodies. It promotes democracy and helps parliaments become stronger, younger, gender-balanced and more diverse. It also defends the human rights of parliamentarians through a dedicated committee made up of MPs from around the world. Twice a year, the IPU convenes over 1,500 parliamentary delegates and partners in a world assembly, bringing a parliamentary dimension to global governance, including the work of the United Nations and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Members (179) Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Associate Members (13) Andean Parliament, Arab Parliament, Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), European Parliament, Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS), Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO), Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (APF), Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Parliament of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

Copyright © Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020

For personal and non-commercial use, all or parts of this publication may be reproduced on condition that copyright and source indications are also copied and no modifications are made. Please inform the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the usage of the publication content.

ISBN 978-92-9142-765-9

Contents

Foreword from the President	4
Foreword from the President of the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians	10
Foreword from the President of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians	12
Foreword from the Secretary General	14
Our First 130 Years	17
Contributions from Our Members	45



Foreword from the President

"For democracy. For everyone" was the inspiration behind William Randal Cremer's and Frédéric Passy's motivation to transform our world through dialogue and understanding between parliamentarians from all over the world: from this emerged our Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

One hundred and thirty years on, our institution is well established. Over the years since its creation, we have seen the world change before our eyes. The IPU has lived through a century of major wars and humanitarian disasters, and today it has been plunged into one of the most serious global pandemics in history, the consequence of which will be an unforeseen crisis, both in health and the economy and, of course, in politics. In the midst of this crisis, authoritarian temptations are there for all to see. So, we must not forget that our institution is founded on the existence and defence of democracy. Our current challenge is therefore even more important: it is not only to promote and develop democracy, but to return to our roots, not least to combat authoritarianism. Our generation – lo and behold – will be the one to either strengthen the democratic path or dig its authoritarian grave. Let there be no doubt: how we, as parliamentarians, respond to this 2020 crisis will carve out the future of our democracy and of our rights and freedoms as the human race.

I try to imagine what the world was like in 1889, when there were many wars and revolutions, civil liberties and rights were a privilege for the few, and the feminist movement was only just emerging.

When I decided to encourage the drafting of this book, I never imagined what the world would be going through this year. Some months have passed since 30 June 2019 when we met in Geneva to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the founding of the IPU. Since then, much has changed; it is a different world. Historically, parliaments have spearheaded the defence of freedom and democracy; now they must again stand up against those who want to abuse power to curtail human rights.

I try to imagine what the world was like in 1889, when there were many wars and revolutions, civil liberties and rights were a privilege for the few, and the feminist movement was only just emerging. At the end of the nineteenth century, very few imagined that human beings would reach the moon, that electricity would be so commonplace in our daily lives, that we would travel in aeroplanes, that communications would develop via radio, television and the internet, and that food would be mass produced using technology. In the field of medicine, penicillin was discovered in 1928 and today surgery can be performed remotely using digital technologies.

In the political arena, progress has not been linear. In the twentieth century, we experienced fascism and Nazism, two world wars and the holocaust. We lived in a polarized world, divided between capitalists and communists – beneath the shadow of a nuclear war – which led to a kind of understanding of what makes humans tick that is still valid today. The world map changed drastically in the last century: Europe was reshaped, decolonization processes were undertaken in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and revolutionary conflicts took place in Latin America. At the same time, however, we began to think about solutions; not local but global solutions. In 1919, the League of Nations was established in pursuit of a mechanism that would use diplomacy as a tool for peace after the First World War. Since this arrangement fell short; as demonstrated by the Second World War – in 1945 multilateralism took an historic and decisive step forward for humanity: the creation of the United Nations Organization. Let's be clear, the United Nations (UN) was the biggest gamble taken by governments in the post-war era, an attempt to resolve conflicts through dialogue. The UN – just as the IPU had recognized 56 years before; understands that peace is the product of mutual understanding and the recognition of common humanity. Hence its Charter proclaims: *“We the people of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small...”*¹

All this led to an increasingly robust human rights regime, where it is understood that freedom without equality is a pipe dream. That is why not only negative rights are promoted, but also the positive ones that imply an obligation on the part of the State to take action, namely those rights known today as social, civil and economic rights, with the aim of achieving greater inclusion and better living conditions for millions of people. In a word: justice. Part of this fight, this conquest of rights, was against racist practices and the Apartheid regime. The names of Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela will always remind us of our commitment to the defence of equality and freedom.

For their part, feminist movements achieved the right of women to vote and to stand for election. One hundred and thirty years ago the sexual revolution, the use of contraceptives and family planning policies were unthinkable. The Beijing Conference in 1995 laid the foundations for policies, legislation and the exercise of rights with full gender equality.

In 1889, around 10 per cent of the world's population lived in a democracy. By 2015, this percentage had increased to 55.8.² It is clear to me that this change is the result of multiple factors, among which is the work of parliamentarians. I am sure that a solid democracy will always have a strong parliament; plurality voting and citizen representation within a parliament or legislative branch are at the very heart of democracy.

The Spanish flu caused around 50 million deaths between 1918 and 1920. At that time there was no immunity or vaccines, there was no treatment or diagnostic tests. In the twenty-first century, despite great advances in science and medicine, humankind is once again facing a situation of great uncertainty: a virus – an almost imperceptible threat – is claiming thousands of lives every day due to its extremely high infection rate.

We feel uncertain in our own existence because the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has overwhelmed the world's strongest health systems and has plunged some cities into the depths of sorrow. Fear of the devastation this virus can cause forced us to change our daily lives and stay at home, close schools, shut up public spaces and withdraw into our inner sanctuaries. The time when we used to greet one another by shaking hands or with a kiss could be gone forever.

Not only has our health been a victim of the pandemic, but our livelihoods are also in jeopardy. The response to the virus has paralysed industries, trade and international flows. Thousands of jobs are being lost every day, and we are seeing financial markets collapse and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises fail overnight. The mistake is to think of this in arithmetical terms, just focusing on the figures and not looking at the stories behind them: millions of families are on the brink of extreme vulnerability, poverty, hunger, discrimination and marginalization.

We have all – and this needs to be said – woken up to this crisis late, especially in the multilateral systems, both in officially declaring it a pandemic and in discussing it in the Group of 20 (G20)

We have all – and this needs to be said – woken up to this crisis late, especially in the multilateral systems, both in officially declaring it a pandemic and in discussing it in the Group of 20 (G20) meeting.

meeting. Moreover, there has been the threat of the responses of several countries that have been seriously authoritarian and nationalist in tone. This has been evident in the competition between leaders that has been more strident than international cooperation, and in too many egos fighting over a vaccine patent while some voices of reason continue to strive for the global solidarity and information sharing that could save thousands of lives.

This international disarray has led to different national responses. Some governments based their health strategy on having transparent information and calling for citizen responsibility, while other nations took a step further, restricting free movement and putting in place intensive monitoring and checks using various technologies. However, some politicians are using the fear of coronavirus to restrict freedom of expression or curtail the opposition, and some countries are going as far as to shoot at anyone out in the streets. This must be considered unacceptable.

Although it is reasonable during an emergency to expect citizens to understand and abide by restrictions (which must be legal, proportionate and temporary), the big question mark that will

hang over us when this crisis is over is whether governments will be tempted to “normalize” the state of emergency and increase their power over citizens by maintaining restrictions on human rights, or whether they will return to a respectful constitutional life and resume as guardians of freedoms. In other words, the serious risk after the pandemic is that some leaders might take advantage of people’s fear to impose authoritarian regimes. Hence the urgent need to return to parliamentary leadership in the fight for democracy and freedom.

After this epidemic, the future of democracy will also be uncertain. Democracy, in its broadest sense, is not only the set of values and electoral processes used by a society, but also the form and practices in which public power is exercised and limited. Of special relevance for the IPU is that two billion persons now have parliaments that have been limited or closed by this pandemic, meaning that monitoring efforts have been reduced or are non-existent.³

The threats facing the democratic model are not easy to resolve: authoritarian temptations to restrict citizens’ rights, using fear as an opportunity and health as a justification; populism weakening institutions and seeking to monopolize representation of the “*real people*”;⁴ the exponential development of technology without regulation of its impact on private life and with still no idea of the consequences it will have in the public sphere; 500 million people who may be pushed into poverty;⁵ and the constant deterioration of public confidence in leaders and politicians are just some of the challenges that lie ahead.

I must stress that the founders’ inspiration “*For democracy. For everyone*” is finding a new meaning in the midst of this crisis: we are the generation that has to choose between the democratic or authoritarian path, between humanism and totalitarianism, and between freedom and oppression.

As parliamentarians, we number 46,552 worldwide. We are the generation that can either stop climate change or condemn the planet to self-destruction. We are the generation that can achieve gender equality, or the one that perpetuates the patterns of violence against women. We are the generation that can open the doors of politics to young people, or deliver the fatal blow to public confidence. We are the generation that can redefine human solidarity, or bolster nationalism and close borders to migrants and refugees. We are the generation that can revitalize multilateralism, or build walls and create divisions. We are the generation that can end poverty, or increase hunger and inequality. We are the generation that can eradicate hate speech and understand that we are one and the same humanity. We are the generation that can change history.

As the second woman and the youngest person to become President of the IPU in its 130 years, I am aware of the enormous potential we have to become the generation of democracy, human rights and inclusion. The IPU has written history: it is the first multilateral political organization and is now

close to achieving universal membership; its parliamentary nature gives it added value because the composition of national delegations must represent political plurality, gender and age. Hence, the IPU has become a mirror of global political reality. The IPU has been the bulwark of democracy and it is now imperative that it becomes so again, but stronger and more solid and united than ever.

The platform for dialogue created by the IPU has been, and can again be, a space for building peace. Cremer and Passy (like six other members of the Organization) won the Nobel Peace Prize; it now falls to us to restore the parliamentary spirit and political work in order to become involved in the search for solutions. There are, as tragic reminders, the political and humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen, the complex struggles in the Sahel, terrorist groups, the challenge of implementing the peace process in Colombia, to mention but a few conflicts.

The planet needs global solutions to problems that know no borders, which is why the sharing of best practices and the opportunity to develop international cooperation initiatives are essential. The IPU has UN observer status. This means that, on the one hand, the IPU brings to the UN tremendous political diversity with the representation and participation of national parliaments and, on the other hand, the IPU takes on the responsibility of translating global agreements into national realities.

Let's work together with passion and intelligence. The future of humanity depends on us, the 46,552 parliamentarians, being courageous and defending democracy, freedom and human rights.

The best mechanism for fulfilling this task of transforming international consensus into local solutions is, precisely, our Organization because of its ability to convene the 179 Member countries and because of our rich history. Legislative powers are the ideal link between multilateralism and citizens: in parliaments treaties are analysed and ratified; they are implemented through national legal frameworks; they become reality through budget allocations that turn them into public policies; and we also monitor the performance of governments in implementing them.

There are many lessons to be learned from the crisis we are going through, but one lesson of utmost importance is the urgent need to strengthen multilateralism and its mechanisms. More, not less, authority from international organizations is required. More, not less, accountability is required. More, not less, parliamentary scrutiny of those multilateral organizations is required. More, not fewer, parliamentary powers in each country are needed. I hope that the reflections on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations will guide us along this path.

An urgent solution to some of the threats to politics and democracy must be found in the best legislative practices. I repeat: parliaments are the very heart of democracy and the best place to defend it. Parliamentarians can make the difference between using technology for political control or using it to save lives; it is up to us to do everything to ensure that social networks

are not a forum for disinformation and discrimination but a mechanism that promotes direct democracy and social dialogue; it is up to us to ensure that artificial intelligence serves humanity rather than subjugates it; it is up to us to legislate and defend the rights to identity, free will and the protection of thoughts,⁶ with a new generation of guarantees in the face of technology that is advancing exponentially every day. It is our responsibility to make the world more inclusive, and we have a mandate to ensure the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development becomes the road map to end poverty and leave no one behind.

In short, the best way to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the founding of the IPU is by: (a) renewing our commitment to democracy and human rights, especially during and after this crisis in which fear and uncertainty are being used to restrict freedom; (b) protecting and reinforcing the political nature of the Organization and its leadership, management and control; (c) renewing our commitment to parliamentary responsibility, always putting people at the centre of our decision-making; and (d) strengthening the fundamental role of each parliament in its country.

Dear parliamentary colleagues, dear readers,

This book was conceived as an effort to remember the importance of the IPU and its foundation in 1889, to learn more about its history and values, as well as to learn about the work that each of the national parliaments has undertaken with us. I thank those who supported the financing of this project and all the speakers of parliaments who helped me make it possible.

I would like to make manifest my most heartfelt gratitude to the Kuwait National Assembly and its Speaker, Mr. Marzouq Al Ghanim for its support. They provided the much needed financial resources that contributed to transform this book from a mere idea into reality. Without their solidarity this would simply not have been possible.

Our history engages and guides us. Let's work together with passion and intelligence. The future of humanity depends on us, the 46,552 parliamentarians, being courageous and defending democracy, freedom and human rights.

Rodin's work "*The Thinker*" was exhibited for the first time in Paris in 1889. This wondrous sculpture tells us just one thing: the person who thinks is the person who creates. Today, our challenge as parliamentarians is precisely that: to think about the world in order to create another. One that is egalitarian, freer and fairer.

Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

1 Charter of the United Nations.

2 <https://ourworldindata.org>

3 <https://www.opendemocracy.net>

4 Müller, J.-W.: ¿Qué es el populismo? Editorial Grano de sal, 2017.

5 Oxfam: Dignity Not Destitution: An 'Economic Rescue Plan For All' to tackle the Coronavirus crisis and rebuild a more equal world, media briefing, April 2020, available at: <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/>

6 Dr. Rafael Yuste: Address at the opening of the General Debate of the 140th IPU Assembly.



Foreword from the President of the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians

130 years of fostering democracy, a century of championing gender equality

The IPU has been a pioneer of gender equality. Since 1921 in Stockholm, when women parliamentarians participated for the first time as delegates in an IPU Conference, women have been playing a crucial role in the Organization.

The IPU's gender work ever since has been shaped by its Members and vice-versa. By the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, when strong political commitments for advancing women's rights were made, the IPU had already gone a long way in advancing gender equality.

On the eve of the First World Conference on Women in 1975 in Mexico, the IPU created a dedicated gender programme and began collecting data on women's participation in parliaments. IPU data and tools to enhance women's participation in politics are indispensable today for policy-makers and advocates alike.

The Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments has provided an indispensable guide for our parliaments towards becoming institutions where women and men lead the way towards the achievement of gender equality.

Since the 1980s, the top leadership of the IPU has always included women through a mandatory quota for elected members of the Executive Committee. In 1987, two seats were reserved for women. The minimum ratio was raised to three in 2003 and five in 2017 – guaranteeing at least one third of seats are now occupied by either sex.

Twenty five years after Beijing, through technical assistance and diplomatic engagement, by taking special measures such as quotas on delegations and keeping a watchful eye on the levels of female participation at its meetings, the IPU has encouraged its Members to include more women and for some achieve gender parity. Today, while only 25% of parliamentarians are women, nearly one third of MPs attending IPU Assemblies are women.

Beyond the numbers, the influence of women at the IPU has also grown exponentially, through the crucial role played by the Forum and Bureau of Women Parliaments in integrating a gender perspective into the work of the IPU and the outcome of deliberations of its governing bodies.

As the only institution of a global scale that brings together national parliaments, the IPU has come to understand that responsibility to advance gender equality should not rest on the shoulders of

women parliamentarians alone. The parliamentary institution has a crucial role to play in advancing gender equality in society. The adoption in 2012 of the Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments has provided an indispensable guide for our parliaments towards becoming institutions where women and men lead the way towards the achievement of gender equality.

Progress can never be taken for granted. And we should always aim for more. The IPU's important gender work can only bear fruits if there is strong political will at the national level. I encourage all IPU Members to continue to strive for better, for equal share by men and women of decision-making positions, for ending all forms of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament and in society, and for genuinely integrating a gender lens in all our endeavours.

For the sake of our democracies, for the strength of our economies and for the well-being of our societies.

Ms. Susan Kihika, President of the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians



Foreword from the President of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians

With the IPU's 130th anniversary, we are given an opportunity to look back at where we came from, our present, and our future. It has led me to think about the people who attended the IPU's first Conference in 1889 and how different they were compared with the people who attend IPU assemblies today.

A lot has changed since then. Although the Organization has aged, the people that bring it to life have not. Our Organization has become much more diverse and much younger.

As we celebrate the 130th anniversary of the IPU, we also celebrate the 10th anniversary of the IPU youth movement. This movement began with the deliberations dedicated to youth that accompanied the adoption of the IPU resolution on "Youth participation in the democratic process" in 2010 of which, as young member of parliament, I was a part. The resolution is a call for action to address the needs of young people and to include them in political decision-making and leadership. It is also a user manual offering concrete measures to empower youth and ensure their full participation in democracy. This resolution also led to the creation of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians, a strategic platform bringing together the young men and women members of parliament from all around the world to ensure that a youth perspective is included, taken into account and mainstreamed throughout the work of parliaments and that of the IPU. This phenomenon is unknown in world's parliamentary history.

I am pleased that since its adoption, the IPU has firmly placed itself at the vanguard of the worldwide movement to empower youth. It is a success that we can all be proud of.

Like many other things at the IPU, the resolution was visionary. I am pleased that since its adoption, the IPU has firmly placed itself at the vanguard of the worldwide movement to empower youth. It is a success that we can all be proud of.

The IPU has become the international observatory of youth in parliament.

Our annual Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians is now a marquee event not only for young MPs, but for the global youth community.

The IPU's advocacy for youth participation and the recommendations it issues in this regard – from the adoption of youth quotas to the lowering of ages of eligibility – are now front and centre in global youth empowerment efforts.

The IPU has also walked the walk by adopting concrete objectives and conducive measures to enhance youth participation in its assemblies and bodies and by promoting youth empowerment in its work. In this term, under my presidency, we aim to invest more in capacity building of young MPs and mentorship programmes in order to share knowledge and experience to enhance the very challenging work we need to do. This process already started successfully.

It is clear that our youth movement has made great strides. But we are not resting on our laurels. If anything, we are revving up our engines to go further. As we celebrate our history and today's achievements, let's look ahead to protect and promote democracy, development and rights for future generations. I therefore call upon all, in particular young people and young MPs to let their voices be heard. Let democracy live, let the IPU live!

Be blessed.

Mr. Melvin Bouva, President of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians



Foreword from the Secretary General

We should never take democracy for granted. Many of our parents and grandparents fought for it in the Second World War and in battles for independence from colonial rule; in the 1990s we celebrated the collapse of authoritarian rule and the birth of new parliaments in various parts of the world; and more recently we saw parliaments stepping up to ensure that democratic processes are not bypassed as governments put in place emergency measures to curb the coronavirus pandemic.

Throughout its 130-year history, the IPU has remained a steady beacon in the ongoing struggle for democratic values and an aspiration for new and developing democracies. It has remained steadfast in defending its foundational aspirations for a peaceful world.

The IPU has stood the test of time, constantly expanding over 13 decades and moving ever closer to universal membership. We have come a long way since a small group of parliamentarians from just nine countries met at the first Inter-parliamentary Conference on 30 June 1889 in Paris, France.

Throughout its 130-year history, the IPU has remained a steady beacon in the ongoing struggle for democratic values and an aspiration for new and developing democracies.

With 179 Member Parliaments and 13 Associate Members today, the IPU has truly become the global organization of national parliaments.

However, despite our growth, we have never lost sight of the principles upheld by our founders – the importance of strong and effective parliaments and the possibility to engage in parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy to resolve differences and help build bridges between nations.

Our history is marked by those principles as this book will illustrate.

From brokering peace talks during the world's hot and cold wars, to providing technical assistance to scores of parliaments; from empowering women and young MPs, to defending the human rights of parliamentarians; in mobilizing the world's parliaments in the work of the United Nations and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the IPU has never ceased to adapt to face the challenges of the day.

Looking to the future, I encourage the IPU to keep the spirit of our founders alive by continuing to work for every single one of the world's 46,000 parliamentarians and 193 parliaments. Parliaments are challenged, today more than ever before, to deliver on and live up to the people's expectations.

The IPU is about parliaments, by parliaments and for parliaments, and ultimately the people. We are honoured and privileged to be of service to the Organization. We commit to ongoing efforts to help it achieve its noble vision of parliaments working for the people, and effectively so.

Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union



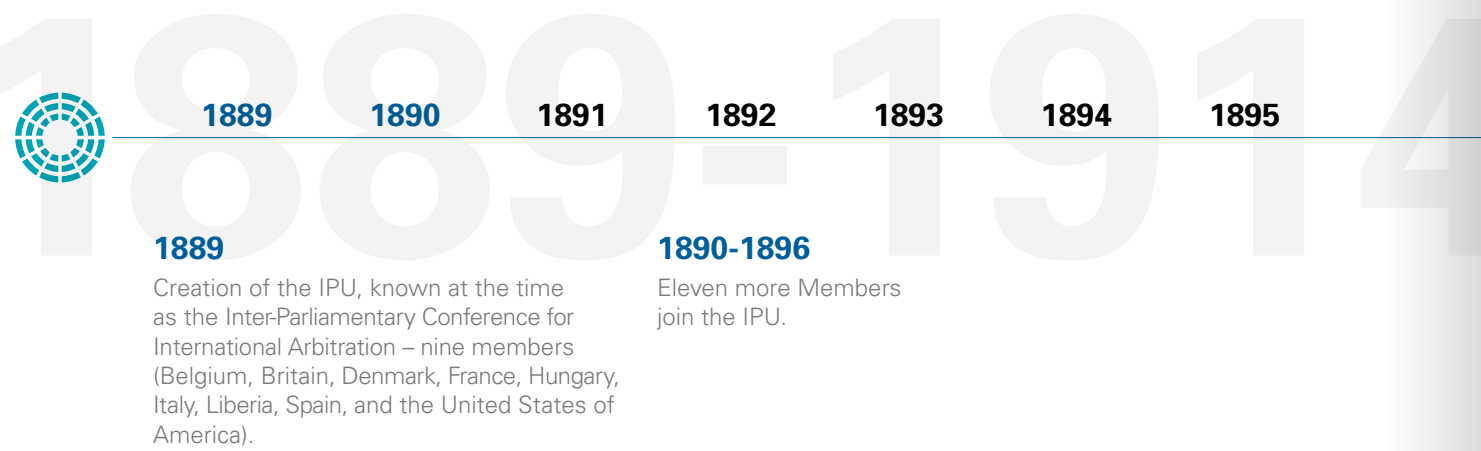
Our First 130 Years

1889-1914 A New Era for International Relations

The late nineteenth century was an uncertain and turbulent period. For many European powers, war was the natural way to settle any differences. But two parliamentarians – one British, one French – realized that it did not have to be this way. Visionaries at the time, William Randal Cremer and Frédéric Passy believed that a more peaceful and stable international order was possible if nation-states could settle their differences through arbitration and not war.

They had reached this conclusion despite different backgrounds and nationalities. William Randal Cremer was a working class politician, while Passy came from an aristocratic family. After hearing about each other, they met in 1888 with other British and French parliamentarians. And they agreed to meet again.

And so, in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was born, albeit with a different name, when the first Inter-Parliamentary Conference for International Arbitration took place in Paris at the Hotel Continental. This time, 94 delegates attended from nine countries: Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Liberia, Spain, and the United States of America.





1.



2.

1903

1904

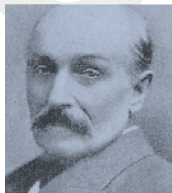
1905

1906

1907

1908

1909



1903

William Randall Cremer, co-founder of the IPU, wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

1904

The United Kingdom and France sign the Entente Cordiale, inspired by The Hague Peace Conference.

1. Baroness Berta von Suttner, an Austrian-Bohemian writer and activist, was a leading figure in the peace and gender movements at the turn of the century. Closely involved with the IPU and the Peace Conferences at The Hague, she became the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905.

© Collection Roger-Viollet

2. Suffragettes at an information office in New York in 1914. The suffragettes fought for the right for women to vote in the early 20th century.

© Photo12/Archives Snark

Momentum for arbitration grew quickly. By 1906, some 38 countries had signed 38 arbitration treaties and IPU membership was increasing rapidly. Meanwhile, the annual conferences convened some of the most influential politicians of the time, including a dozen members who later won the Nobel Peace Prize. And the list of IPU achievements grew.

First, IPU Members actively participated in two Peace Conferences at The Hague in 1899 and 1907, covering arbitration, arms control, and the laws of war. The first conference established the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which still functions today.

Second, the conferences demonstrated that dialogue helped build peace and development. In this way, they smoothed the way for international agreements such as the 1904 Entente Cordiale between the United Kingdom and France, which marked an end to centuries of intermittent conflict.

And, third, most importantly, the IPU had shown that a new international order was possible. It thus laid the foundations for today's multilateral system, including the League of Nations, and later the United Nations.

But in 1914 this was not yet enough. As preparations for the third Peace Conference at The Hague were underway, the First World War broke out.

1910**1911****1912****1913****1914****1915****1916****1907**

Second Peace Conference at The Hague. Elections to the new Parliament of Finland are the first elections in Europe with universal suffrage and, for the first time in the world, women are elected to parliament.

**1914-1918**

First World War

1918-1949 New Era, New Energy for Parliamentary Dialogue

The First World War shattered the lives of millions, but – by discrediting aristocracy, authoritarianism and imperialism – it breathed new life into democracy.

What followed were good times for the IPU, which survived the war and managed to rebuild its structures. Its Secretary General, Christian L. Lange, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1921, was an able administrator and as such secured critical financial support from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

The new League of Nations may have been the biggest show in town, but the IPU was well established now. Parliamentarians still saw the value of dialogue. As if to prove their point, the IPU brought former enemies – France and Germany – together. It was the first international organization to do so.

1915

1916

1917

1918

1919

1920

1921



1919

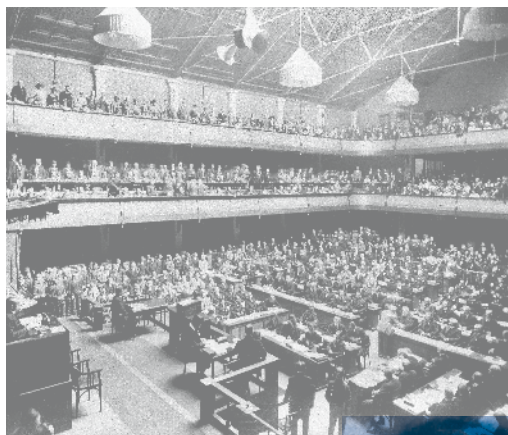
Paris Peace Conference results in the creation of the League of Nations and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

1920-1928

Fifteen more Members join the IPU, bringing the total number of Members to 40.

1921

IPU's Secretary General Christian L. Lange wins the Nobel Peace Prize. IPU Stockholm Conference welcomes female delegates for the first time.



1.



2.

3.



4.

1922

1923

1924

1925

1926

1927

1928

1. First meeting of the League of Nations in 1920 in Geneva. The League of Nations was founded on 10 January 1920, following the Paris Peace Conference that ended the First World War.
© Harlingue/Roger-Viollet

2. In 1922, Antonie Pfülf, a German teacher and an MP, was the first woman to speak at an Inter-Parliamentary Conference.
© AdsD/Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

3. Christian L. Lange, IPU Secretary General from 1909 to 1933, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1921.
© AFP

4. The opening session of the 23rd Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1 October 1925 in the House of Representatives, U.S. Capitol Building. © Harris & Ewing

IPU Members were also pushing democratic ideas even further, promoting gender equality, international trade, and better rights for workers. On trade, the IPU promoted lower tariffs, a European Customs Union, regional economic agreements, and more oversight of international trusts and corporations. And it made a powerful case for settling trade disputes through international courts.

In another example of IPU influence, its promotion of laws to protect worker rights led to cooperation with the newly created International Labour Organization (ILO), whose first director general, Albert Thomas, had been active in the IPU too.

From 1929 onwards, however, the Great Depression unleashed historical forces beyond the control of any single individual or organization. Dictatorships emerged. Arms races began. The clouds of war were gathering.

When war broke out in 1939, IPU activities came to a temporary halt.

The Governing Council met for the first time after the war, in September 1945. Two years later, the IPU Conference met in Cairo, Egypt, with parliamentarians from 24 different countries.

1929

1930

1931

1932

1933

1934

1935



1929

Start of the Great Depression.



1936

1937

1938

1939

1940

1941

1942



1939-1945

Second World War

The Great Depression –
Unemployed men queued outside a
soup kitchen in Chicago.
© Shutterstock



1



2.

1915-1949

1943

1944

1945

1946

1947

1948

1949

1945

The IPU Governing Council meets for the first time after the war.

1946

Beginning of the Cold War.

1947

The Inter-Parliamentary Conference meets in Cairo, Egypt, for the first time since the war.

1. The Sansad Bhavan (Parliament Building) is the house of the Parliament of India. India gained independence in 1947 from Great Britain and became a democratic republic in 1950.
© AFP/Pool/Ravi Raveendran

2. In November 1945 women help to rebuild houses in Germany. The IPU believes that parliaments should be at the heart of conflict prevention, mediation, reconciliation and peace-making processes.
© AFP

La 36ème Conférence de l'Union Interparlementaire

La séance d'aujourd'hui

A 10 h. 5, l'hémicycle est encore vide. Seul un délégué des Pays-Bas occupe la place. On s'attend que le démarrage de la police du Parlement. Mais voilà que les délégués s'annoncent par groupes, les uns, les autres, les uns après les autres, commencent à se faire entendre.

Après que S.E. Heykal a déclaré ouverte les débats, il prend lui-même la parole et prononce, en discours qui nous donne par ailleurs.

Tout de suite après, le discours est traduit en anglais. Après S.E. Heykal, c'est la parole est donnée à M. Karolyi (Hongrie), ancien président de la République hongroise et actuellement député au Parlement.

"Il s'exprime en anglais et résume les points de vue de son pays à cet égard, car il est l'Allié de l'Allemagne mis contre la volonté du peuple."

Actuellement, la Hongrie n'a qu'un désir : contribuer avec toutes les puissances et s'efforcer de l'économie de la démocratie mondiale, tout en maintenant ses propres relations avec les voisins de l'Europe.

Au moment d'aller sous presse on nous annonce :

- 1) que les Commissions juridiques, ethniques et coloniales se réuniront demain matin à 9 h. 30 ;
- 2) que le Rotary Club d'Egypte invite pour aujourd'hui à 1 h. 30, au Continental, les Rotariens qui seraient partie des délégations.

Le Congrès s'amuse

L'Hémicycle n'est pas seulement le lieu de la discussion, mais aussi le lieu de la détente. Les délégués, en effet, ne sont pas seulement des hommes d'Etat, mais aussi des hommes de lettres, des hommes de science, des hommes d'art. Ils ont donc des goûts et des passions diverses. C'est pourquoi, au cours de la conférence, on a pu assister à de nombreuses manifestations de détente, qui ont permis aux délégués de se connaître et de s'apprécier.

Le soir du 10, le Congrès s'est réuni au Grand Hotel d'Egypte pour assister à une représentation de l'opéra "L'opéra de la nuit" de Puccini.

Le soir du 11, le Congrès s'est réuni au Grand Hotel d'Egypte pour assister à une représentation de l'opéra "L'opéra de la nuit" de Puccini. On a pu assister à de nombreuses manifestations de détente, qui ont permis aux délégués de se connaître et de s'apprécier.

On a pu assister à de nombreuses manifestations de détente, qui ont permis aux délégués de se connaître et de s'apprécier. On a pu assister à de nombreuses manifestations de détente, qui ont permis aux délégués de se connaître et de s'apprécier.

On a pu assister à de nombreuses manifestations de détente, qui ont permis aux délégués de se connaître et de s'apprécier.

On a pu assister à de nombreuses manifestations de détente, qui ont permis aux délégués de se connaître et de s'apprécier.

On a pu assister à de nombreuses manifestations de détente, qui ont permis aux délégués de se connaître et de s'apprécier.

Au congrès interparlementaire Le Phare du Caire

Le Phare du Caire
Le 31 mai 1947
COMPOSITION
DE LA DELEGATION
BELGE

La délégation parlementaire belge à la 36ème conférence de l'Union interparlementaire qui se tiendra au Caire du 7 au 12 avril 1947, sera particulièrement importante. Elle sera conduite par le Comte Carton de Wiart, ministre d'Etat, président du Conseil de l'Union Interparlementaire.

La délégation comprendra notamment MM. Balin, Pholien, Ronsé, Dierckx, Van Glabbeke, Liebaert et Libar, anciens ministres, les Sénateurs V. comte Cassé de Maulde, Catteau, Machens, Olyffe, les députés Bohy, Maes, de Bryn. Anacle, Deschepper, Van Eyn, de Scheyven, Tielemans, de Clercq.

ET DE LA DELEGATION GRECQUE

Les 8 députés qui représenteront la Grèce au 6ème Congrès interparlementaire du Caire, s'embarqueront à bord du "Corinthos". Ce sont :

MM. Leon Magas (parti démocrate socialiste de Papandréou), Gregoire Cassinatis (indépendant), Mavros (libéral socialiste), Triandafyllidis (libéral chrétien), Sotiriopoulos (populiste), Mitsoulis (populiste), Antonopoulos (populiste) et Tsakalos (indépendant, ancien ministre).

4.

Au cours de ses quatrième et cinquième séances

La Conférence interparlementaire a discuté du problème des réfugiés et de celui des réparations de guerre

Importantes interventions des délégués égyptiens Geoffrey Routon Ghali, Hamed Mohsen et Samah Moussa

La conférence interparlementaire a discuté du problème des réfugiés et de celui des réparations de guerre. Les délégués égyptiens ont fait de nombreuses interventions importantes. Geoffrey Routon Ghali, Hamed Mohsen et Samah Moussa ont été les principaux intervenants. Ils ont souligné l'importance de ces problèmes pour l'Egypte et pour le monde entier. Ils ont également souligné la nécessité d'une action internationale pour résoudre ces problèmes.

La conférence interparlementaire a discuté du problème des réfugiés et de celui des réparations de guerre. Les délégués égyptiens ont fait de nombreuses interventions importantes. Geoffrey Routon Ghali, Hamed Mohsen et Samah Moussa ont été les principaux intervenants. Ils ont souligné l'importance de ces problèmes pour l'Egypte et pour le monde entier. Ils ont également souligné la nécessité d'une action internationale pour résoudre ces problèmes.

La conférence interparlementaire a discuté du problème des réfugiés et de celui des réparations de guerre. Les délégués égyptiens ont fait de nombreuses interventions importantes. Geoffrey Routon Ghali, Hamed Mohsen et Samah Moussa ont été les principaux intervenants. Ils ont souligné l'importance de ces problèmes pour l'Egypte et pour le monde entier. Ils ont également souligné la nécessité d'une action internationale pour résoudre ces problèmes.

3.

3. Press clipping from Le Journal d'Egypte about the 36th IPU Conference in Cairo, on the subject of refugees, already a burning issue. © Le Journal d'Egypte

4. Press clippings from La Patrie and Le Phare d'Egypte, Egyptian newspapers, on the 36th IPU Conference in Cairo in April 1947, naming various delegations attending the meeting.

© La Patrie and Le Phare d'Egypte

1950s The IPU Supports New Parliaments

The IPU returned quickly to work after 1945. With headquarters in Switzerland, its administrative structures had remained intact during the war and the IPU had continued to function.

As the international community faced up to the enormous challenges of reconstruction and reconciliation, the IPU debated the war, the reconstruction of Europe, and the newly created United Nations.

While IPU Members spoke of multilateralism, however, the two superpowers moved swiftly to a new confrontation. This face-off was to last more than four decades.

During the Cold War, IPU debates covered disarmament, nuclear tests, and the need to limit the arms race. And by convening parliamentarians across the Iron Curtain divide, it showed the possibilities – and benefits – of dialogue. Détente would follow in the 1980s.

These were difficult times for the IPU. The Iron Curtain had fallen across Europe and the World and tensions were high.

1950s

1950

1951

1952

1953

1954

1955

1956

1950

The IPU's first geopolitical group is established.



1951

Libya is the first African country to gain independence under Idris King of the United Kingdom of Libya from 1951 to 1969.

Decolonization brought new hope and opportunities for dialogue between parliamentarians of the world. Many of the newly independent ex-colonies faced urgent problems of underdevelopment, often linked to their colonial past. The IPU presented an important and informative forum to discuss such issues as free trade, fair access to international markets, and development aid.

Many parliaments in the world’s newly independent countries were also building political systems from scratch. Over time, IPU support for parliamentary development became a cornerstone of its portfolio. Since the 1950s, the IPU has provided technical assistance to more than 70 parliaments. Priority goes to parliaments in transition or in post-conflict countries, but support is provided to any parliament that wishes to improve the way it works.

1957

1958

1959

1960

1961

1962

1963

1957

The European Economic Community is established by the Treaty of Rome.

1959

The IPU has 69 Members.



The United Nations building in New York. The IPU’s strategic partnership with the United Nations ensures that parliamentarians are involved in global decision-making processes.
© Collection Roger-Viollet

1960s-70s The IPU Addresses Human Rights and Gender Equality

The news cycle accelerated in the sixties and seventies. Civil rights, the Viet Nam War, and the race to space competed for attention with energy crises, decolonization, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. Politics had never been so global.

For the IPU, decolonization brought new countries onto the political map and shifted the focus of discussion. As membership grew from 69 Member Parliaments in 1959 to 113 Members in 1979, IPU meetings explored the disparities between rich countries and the Global South.

This growing interest in social justice extended to human rights. The IPU worked with parliaments to ensure their countries signed up to human rights treaties and implemented relevant laws. This IPU programme still runs today. In Burkina Faso, for example, a parliamentary human rights committee helped abolish the country's death penalty in 2018.

1960

1961

1962

1963

1964

1965

1966



1961

The Berlin Wall is erected.



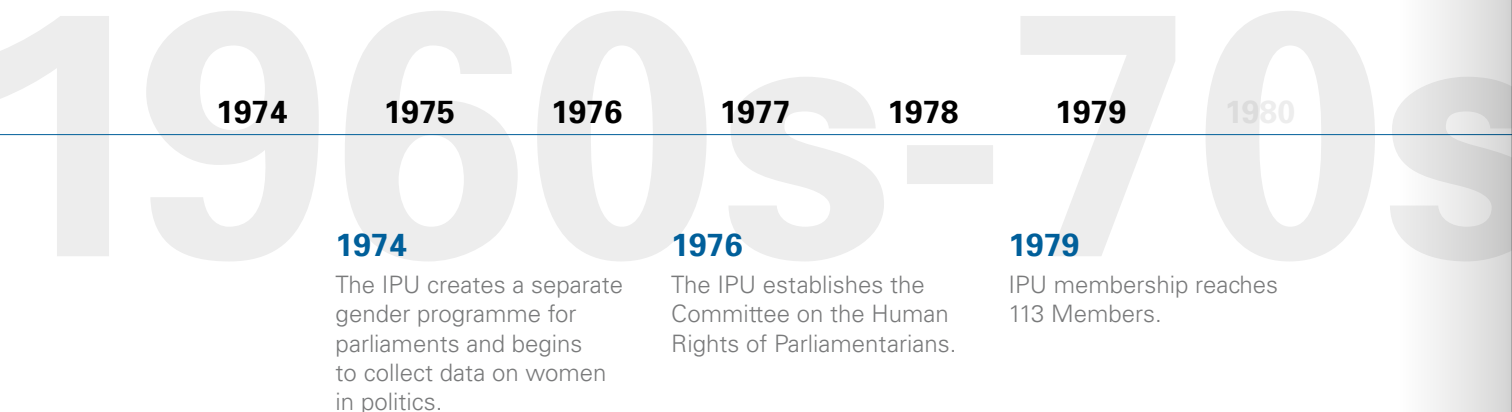
1968

Student and worker protests take place worldwide, especially in Europe.

Parliamentarians' human rights also frequently came under attack – arbitrary arrest, detention, and even assassination of parliamentarians are all too common. In 1976, the IPU established its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the only international mechanism in the world with a mandate to defend the human rights of persecuted parliamentarians. Its work includes mobilizing the international parliamentary community to support abused and threatened MPs, lobbying closely national authorities, and sending trial observers.

Human rights efforts at the IPU also included promoting gender equality. This was not new. The IPU had been promoting gender equality since the 1921 Stockholm Conference, when female delegates were welcomed for the first time. But the IPU's work on gender gave the issue more visibility in parliaments and influenced initiatives on gender, including the 1995 Beijing Declaration, one of the first global blueprints for advancing women's rights.

In 1974, the IPU created a separate gender programme and began to collect data on women's participation in parliaments. IPU data and tools to enhance woman's participation in politics are indispensable today for policy-makers and campaigners alike.



1980s-90s Democracy Needs Strong Parliaments

As the Soviet empire slowly imploded, some analysts predicted the “end of history.” But even as the twentieth century came to a close, the world faced plenty of challenges. New countries emerged from the former Soviet Union. Elsewhere authoritarian regimes lost their superpower protection and collapsed. These changes often led to democratic government, but the cost of transition was often war.

The IPU continued to promote dialogue, facilitating peace wherever it could. In the aftermath of the war in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), British parliamentarians met with Argentinian counterparts at the IPU, helping to restore diplomatic relations. Later meetings between British and Irish counterparts at the IPU may have been unofficial, but they also helped to build the necessary trust for the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

1980

1981

1982

1983

1984

1985

1986



1980

Final decade of the Cold War.

1985

The IPU organizes the first meeting of women parliamentarians in Lomé, Togo.

And while some international organizations were reluctant to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states, the IPU supported the emergence of democratic regimes by strengthening new parliaments wherever it could. Some of these parliaments had existed before, but were newly democratic. Some had been created from scratch. In strengthening them, the IPU would help to keep the peace.

Democratic ideals were so important for the IPU that, in 1994, it adopted the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections. Three years later, it went further with its Universal Declaration on Democracy, describing democracy as a universally recognized ideal based on common values shared by all people.

The Declarations did not go unnoticed. The UN Charter had said nothing about parliaments in 1945, referring only to governments. But by 2002, the UN General Assembly had recognized the value of the IPU in an official resolution (57/32).

1987

1988

1989

1990

1991

1992

1993



1989

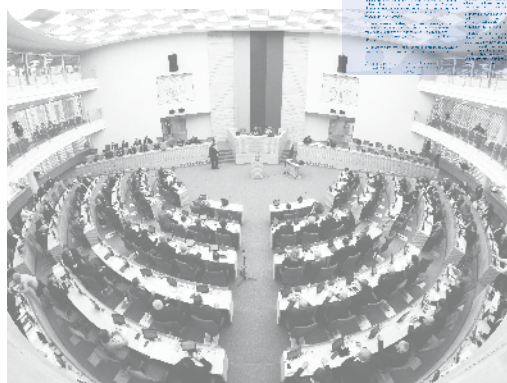
The Berlin Wall comes down and Germany is reunified a year later.

1990s

New democracies are born in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

1992

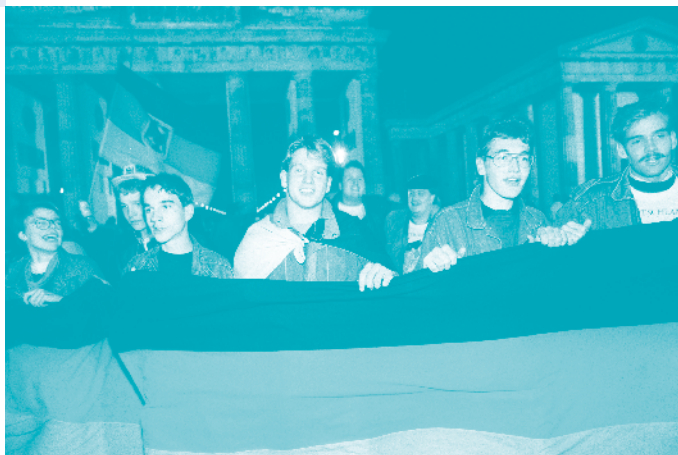
End of the Cold War.



1.



2.



3.

1994

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

2000

1994

The IPU publishes the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections.

1995

IPU data shows that 11.3% of parliamentarians in the world are women.

1997

The IPU adopts the Universal Declaration on Democracy.

1999

The IPU reaches 154 Members.

1. The Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament). Lithuania rejoined the IPU in 1991.
© Petras Malukas/AFP

2. The Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the IPU Council in Cairo in 1997. The IPU believes in universal principles and core democratic values that are applicable to all parliaments.
© IPU

3. Berlin's inhabitants celebrate Germany's reunification in 1990. The end of the Cold War saw the birth of new democracies and parliaments which the IPU supported. © AFP/Gilles Leimdorfer

2000-Today The Focus Turns to Youth

As the twenty-first century got underway, the world faced a formidable set of issues, including climate change, terrorism, and growing inequality. But global leaders began to rise to the challenge when they agreed a set of goals, the Millennium Development Goals, and their successors, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IPU had contributed to the discussions on the SDGs, particularly Goal 16 which recognizes the importance of strong institutions.

But such an ambitious agenda would not be easy to achieve. It would require international collaboration and widespread political support. The IPU had long promoted multilateralism. By building awareness of the SDGs within national parliaments, the IPU could also help to build political support. Parliaments have a key role to play in implementing the SDGs, by fixing national budgets or shaping political agendas.

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2007

At the behest of the IPU, the UN General Assembly passes a resolution to establish an International Day of Democracy on 15 September.



2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2008

IPU data shows that 18.3 per cent of parliamentarians in the world are women.

2010

The Arab Spring: anti-government protests across the Middle East and North Africa. The IPU sets up the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, an international framework for youth participation in democracy.

Young people protesting to save the planet.

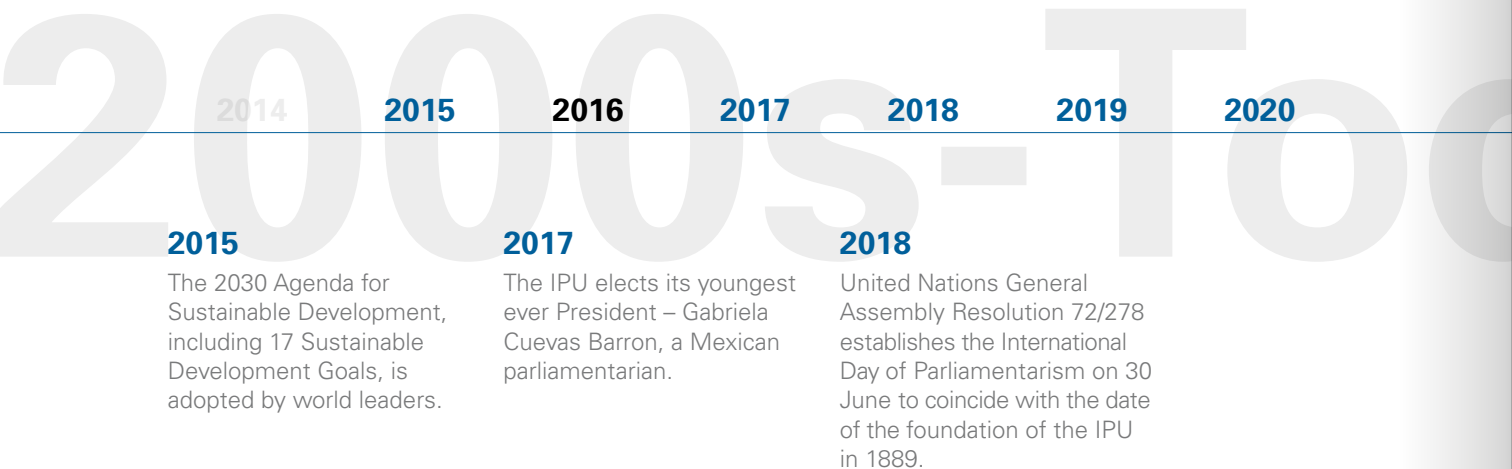
© AFP/Phill Magakoe

Meanwhile, accelerated by social media, the world changes at an ever-faster pace. The Arab Spring and rising populism have shown the price of failure for governments that do not deliver widely. Trust in parliaments is falling.

And so, besides supporting parliaments to deliver more effectively, the IPU supports parliaments to build trust, including by becoming more representative of their citizens. The IPU has been a leader on gender issues since its Stockholm Conference in 1921. And in the twenty-first century, it began to focus on youth.

Youth often have the most to win or lose from the decisions of their governments, but remain under-represented. In 2019, more than half the world population was under 30 years of age, but only 2.2 per cent of parliamentarians were under 30. In 2010, the IPU urged parliaments to focus more on youth. It also set up an international framework for youth participation in democracy and a Forum of Young Parliamentarians. Its data on youth in parliament helps to fuel reflections and promote greater youth participation in democracy.

Finally, in 2017, the IPU elected its youngest ever President, Gabriela Cuevas Barron, a parliamentarian from Mexico and second woman to be President of the IPU in 130 years.





2019

IPU data shows that 24.3 per cent of parliamentarians are women. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines becomes the IPU's 179th Member at the 140th IPU Assembly in Doha, Qatar.

2020

The Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament will take place virtually. The conference, which takes place every five years, is designed to encourage closer cooperation between the holders of the highest office in the world's parliaments and the UN.

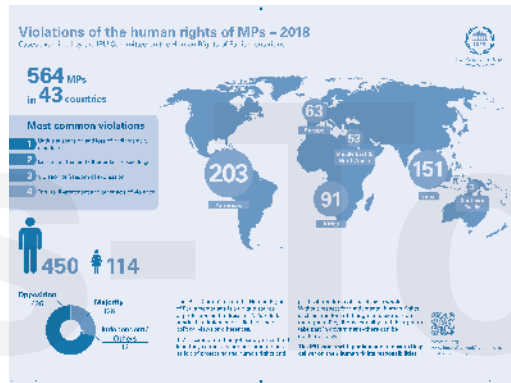
Gabriela Cuevas Barron, the youngest IPU President in history, was elected in October 2017 for three years. © IPU



1.



2.

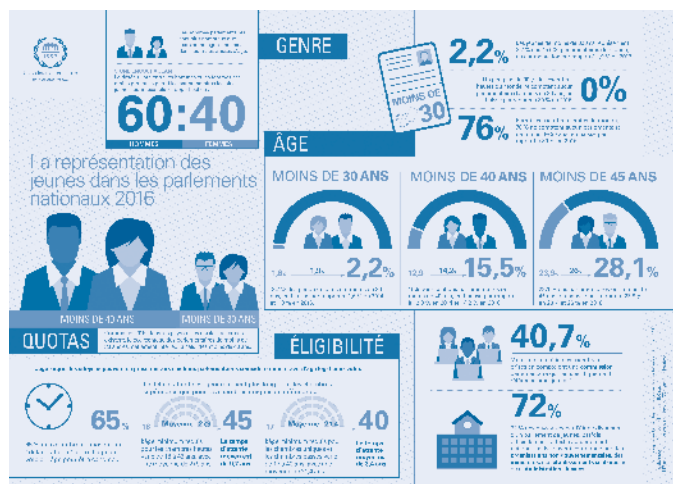


3.

1. Cuidado! El machismo mata (Beware, machismo kills!). Demonstration in Chile on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The IPU publishes regular studies on violence against women in parliament.
© AFP/Martin Bernetti

2. The Forum of the Women parliamentarians during the 140th IPU Assembly. The IPU is convinced that reaching gender equality is a shared responsibility between men and women.
© Aboos Images

3. Every year, the IPU publishes a map showing the number of cases of MPs examined by the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.
© IPU



4.



6.



5.

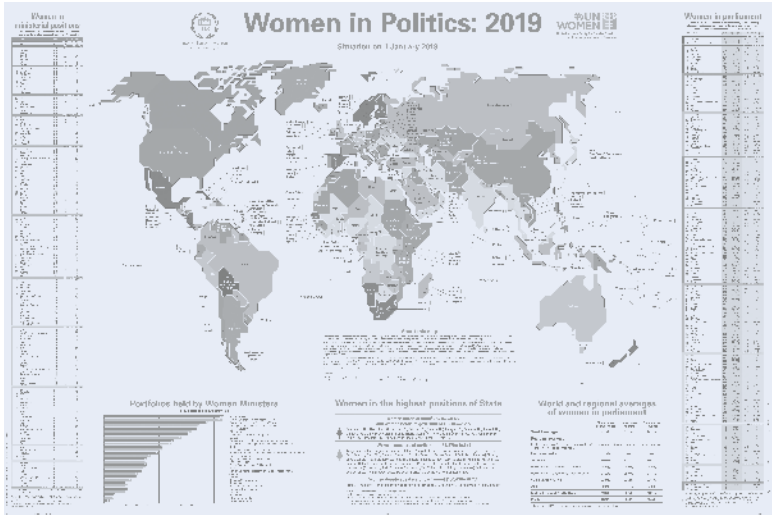
4. Every year, the IPU publishes data that shows the level of youth representation in national parliaments. © IPU

5. On the day of Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's inauguration as President of the Maldives in 2018. The IPU has been actively defending the rights of persecuted MPs in the Maldives, including Ibrahim Mohamed Solih himself.
© AFP/A. Shurau

6 The South African Parliament in session. The IPU is convinced that strong parliaments are a cornerstone of democracy. They represent the will of the people, pass laws, and hold governments to account.
© AFP/Pool/Mike Hutchings



1.



2.



3.

1. 'Dialogue and Inclusiveness Central to Democracy' was the theme of the International Day of Democracy (IDD) in 2012. An IPU initiative, the IDD is celebrated around the world on 15 September, following a resolution passed by the UN General Assembly in 2007. © IPU

2. The IPU/UN Women 2019 map on women in politics showing the position of women in political decision-making around the world. © IPU

3. António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, and María Fernanda Espinosa (second from right), President of the General Assembly, at the IPU-UN 2019 Annual Parliamentary Hearing in New York. © Joel Thomas Sheakoski



4.

4. Valeria Gonzalez, 19, votes for the first time in San Jose, Costa Rica. According to IPU's latest statistics, women now account for 30.7 per cent of parliamentarians in the Americas, the highest regional average in the world. © AFP/Carlos Gonzalez



5.

5. The Speaker of the Parliament of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Thomas Sanga, at the 140th Assembly in Doha, Qatar, in April 2019. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines became the IPU's 179th member, bringing the global organization of parliaments one step closer to universal membership. © IPU/Joel Thomas Sheakoski



Contributions from our Members

Afghanistan
Albania
Andorra
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Austria
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Bhutan
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burundi
Cambodia
Canada
Chile
China
Congo (DRC)
Costa Rica
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus

Czech Republic
Congo
Denmark
Djibouti
Ecuador
Egypt
Equatorial Guinea
Finland
France
Gambia
Georgia
Germany
Guinea-Bissau
Guyana
Hungary
Iceland
India
Indonesia
Iran
Israel
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya

Kuwait
Latvia
Libya
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malawi
Mali
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Myanmar
Namibia
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Nigeria
North Macedonia
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Poland
Portugal
Qatar

Romania
Russia
Rwanda
San Marino
Senegal
Serbia
Singapore
Slovenia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Turkey
Turkmenistan
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
Uruguay
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zimbabwe

Contribution from Afghanistan

Dear parliamentarians, colleagues and friends of democracy; congratulations to the IPU for continuously working for peace, global democracy and cooperation among parliaments.

The IPU is a great example of unity, which was founded by two parliamentarians, began its work as a small group of parliamentarians dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue, and has since grown into today's global organization of national parliaments. Now we are connected to 179 national parliaments around the world proving that: "Together We Can Achieve".

The IPU has always taken the lead when the world has been in danger. Today, the IPU is needed more than ever before. As terrorism spreads more widely, we hope the IPU will continue to be a pioneer of peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue in countries of unrest, including Afghanistan.

On behalf of the Secretariat of Wolesi Jirga (House of People) of the National Assembly of Afghanistan, we sincerely congratulate the IPU and all its members on the 130th anniversary. We believe that inter-parliamentary relations between the members of the IPU will continue to be developed in the future and will contribute to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the IPU.

As terrorism spreads more widely, we hope the IPU will continue to be a pioneer of peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue in countries of unrest, including Afghanistan.

Since the anniversary is going to be celebrated on the International Day of Parliamentarism, we wish to extend our encouragement to all parliaments in the world. It is an opportunity for parliaments to celebrate democracy. This is the moment when we should encourage people and parliaments to remember their duties and commitments and improve the lives of the people they represent.

Parliaments can be pillars of democracy and important defenders of human rights and, being all connected through the IPU, we can link local and global issues; through laws and decisions we can contribute significantly to achieving the SDGs.

As the IPU provides a unique global space for parliamentary diplomacy by bringing opposing sides around the table, we would encourage Member States to share their best parliamentary practices with the Afghan Parliament.

Congratulations once again, and we look forward to achieving more for all our people.



Contribution from Andorra

The IPU is celebrating its 130th anniversary and continues to build bridges between parliaments throughout the world so that issues of common interest can be debated. This is an essential forum for the twenty-first century to make sure the democratic landscape and a respect for human rights continue to be the foundations of the world in which we live.

The Andorran Parliament believes that its members must use the opportunity to carve out an active role on the international stage. That is why the Council believes that relations between international organizations and parliaments are mutually beneficial.

This year, the Andorran Parliament (the General Council) is also celebrating an anniversary. Six hundred years ago, in 1419, the Consell de la Terra was founded. It was the ancient assembly of the Andorrans and the forerunner of our current representative body. The Consell would be considered imperfect by today's standards, as only a small section of the population could participate. However, it demonstrates that, as early as the fifteenth century, there was a deeply held desire to manage our own affairs through dialogue with others and by submitting proposals to the lords who governed the fortunes of the country at the time.

Political participation has gradually increased in Andorran society. A revolt in 1881 helped to kindle a sense of sovereignty among Andorrans. It also identified the need for more democratic institutions and the ambition for a stake in our past and future as a community.

In 1993, Andorrans voted to approve the Principality's Constitution. It contributed to the development of a new parliamentary order that gradually built up the Principality's institutions, with a complete separation of powers.

As soon as this new chapter began, the General Council understood that contributing to international organizations was an excellent way to share knowledge and practices and jointly contribute to developing the discourse of the debates that shape each era.

In 2009, our Parliament completed an IPU self-evaluation exercise, which led to an improvement in its public information resources. In 2015, the General Council adopted a compact for improving gender equality that implemented the recommendations of the IPU. After elections in 2019, the Parliament achieved gender parity for the second time in its history, and the first ever woman Speaker took office. In addition, all four members of the internal management board, the Sindicatura, are women; they represent the different political groups within the chamber.

© Eduard Comellas. Consell General Parlament d'Andorra.



On this 130th anniversary, it is a great pleasure to be able to share information about particular aspects of our duties. It demonstrates how our own analysis has enabled progress to be made in many areas of public interest. The meetings that the IPU organizes are an opportunity for us as parliamentarians to make contact, share our professional experiences and listen to different points of view on general issues. This allows us to improve our mutual understanding and knowledge, while also adding to and enriching domestic discourse and decision making.

The Andorran Parliament believes that its members must use the opportunity to carve out an active role on the international stage. That is why the Council believes that relations between international organizations and parliaments are mutually beneficial. Parliamentarians play a leading role in ensuring that international agreements are implemented domestically by passing legislation, holding the government to account and fulfilling their duty to engage with the public.

It is crucial that all parliaments speak up at IPU meetings. At a time when the world wants to reconfigure relations between countries, the best way to avoid political polarization and to champion inclusion is to strengthen a safe space from where we can express ourselves and listen to different concerns, various viewpoints, and events recounted from contrasting perspectives.

Andorran parliamentarians are committed to continued and active participation in the IPU's work and to taking ownership of the resolutions it adopts. Indeed, we are very much aware that it is the commitment of Member Parliaments that allows the IPU to achieve its ultimate objectives, and therefore to secure its *raison d'être*.



Contribution from **Andorra**

Contribution from Angola

The Angolan Parliament had its first institutional contact with the IPU in 1984. Although not a member of the IPU, the Angolan Parliament welcomed the resolution condemning the apartheid regime, which was approved by more than 100 Members of the IPU at the time.

This resolution demonstrated the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in defending just and important causes for a better world. The anti-apartheid vote motivated the young Angolan Parliament to apply for membership of the IPU, which resulted in Angola becoming the 105th Member of the Organization in 1986.

The history of the Angolan Parliament and the IPU serves as a guiding compass of what is, what has been and must continue to be the organization that brings together all the parliaments. In today's world and in the future, the IPU should remain the world's platform for parliaments and the first stage of parliamentary diplomacy.

The issue of environment and climate change requires our attention not only in terms of politics, but also through behavioural changes. It was with this objective that, from 2016, the National Assembly of Angola implemented the digitization of document distribution for its plenary sessions. Within three years, the automation of all plenary work resulted in 20 million sheets of paper saved; equivalent to 2,000 trees.

The role of peacebuilding is unequivocally one of the functions that the Angolan parliament has played, and it hopes to inspire other parliaments in post-conflict countries to learn from this experience.

Angola has made substantial progress in increasing the percentage of female representation. In the National Assembly of Angola 30 per cent of the seats are occupied by women and, although this figure is almost 6 per cent above the world average, our efforts to achieve parity will continue.

The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the National Assembly of Angola, which integrates all women regardless of their party, has played a crucial role in promoting greater inclusion of women. This group has been able to lead some important legislative initiatives such as the law against domestic violence, approved in 2011.

The inclusion of youth in the Angolan National Assembly is a concern of all parliamentary parties. The main parties have even set quotas for young people on their electoral lists. However, the inclusion of youth is a constant challenge because more than 50 per cent of the African continent's population is under 30 years old. Therefore, the inclusion of more

young people in parliamentary life is important for all parliaments in the world, but even more important for African parliaments.

The Angolan National Assembly has played a significant role in the process of peacebuilding, considering the country has experienced 27 years of conflict; one of the longest periods in the African continent.

Indeed, the peace achieved in 2002 has been consolidated with the efforts of all Angolans, and without doubt with the contribution of our Parliament, embodied in the learning process of institutional coexistence, and demonstrated by the fact that several peace negotiators are now colleagues sitting side by side without giving up on their political views.

The role of peacebuilding is unequivocally one of the functions that the Angolan parliament has played, and it hopes to inspire other parliaments in post-conflict countries to learn from this experience.



Contribution from Argentina

At the end of the nineteenth century, parliamentarians from the United Kingdom and France gathered in Paris and the IPU was born. The goal of the meeting was to support arbitration as a means to solve international disputes: to work together for international peace.

The United Nations was founded in 1945, after the Second World War, continuing the efforts of parliamentarians from different countries to create international organizations for peacemaking. The scope of the work of the IPU has subsequently expanded to issues like liberty of expression, combatting terrorism, the fight against discrimination, and the protection of the rights of women and children.

The recognition that all wars end with a dialogue shows it is better to start with dialogue without going through the war. That is what the IPU and we stand for.

In 1974, at the Interparliamentary Conference in Tokyo, after a debate on torture, the IPU decided to establish a mechanism for the defence of human rights of citizens and their representatives by creating the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The goal of the Committee is not only to respect and protect human rights, but to avoid further violations in the future.

Now, 130 years after the first step, the IPU still provides a platform to strengthen relations with other parliamentarians in order to build confidence and friendship. Confidence is the basis for cooperation as distrust is the basis for confrontation. Confidence opens a space that allows you to listen to others, so to understand their interests and views. Respect for other views is a requisite for dialogue, and dialogue is the way to peace. The recognition that all wars end with a dialogue shows it is better to start with dialogue without going through the war. That is what the IPU and we stand for.

© National Congress of Argentina



© Shutterstock.com



Contribution from Armenia

The National Assembly of Armenia became a Member of the IPU in 1995. Since then the Armenian delegation has been actively involved in the work of the IPU and that of the Eurasia Geopolitical Group, which was set up in 1998.

In 2011, in cooperation with the IPU and UNICEF, the National Assembly organized a regional seminar in Yerevan on Child Rights, attended by MPs from 10 countries.

For decades the IPU has been committed to addressing many crucial problems, trying to voice them and find solutions. In the coming years the Armenian National Assembly would like to see the IPU continue its work as an organization addressing peace, democracy, human rights, sustainable development and other matters, united and committed to defending the vulnerable groups of society, the rights of women and children, especially in conflict zones and during war time.

The Armenian National Assembly has a gender balanced delegation to the IPU with equal numbers of women and men parliamentarians. This is a commitment our parliament has implemented and a principle the IPU has always observed.

In 2018 Armenian people took to the streets and started a Velvet Revolution. Under the new Constitution the Republic of Armenia became a parliamentary system country. On 9 December 2018 snap parliamentary elections were held which, according to international observers, were transparent, free and fair. The current members of parliament are actively involved in legislative activity, parliamentary diplomacy and fulfill their oversight function.



© Murad Tovmasyan HH azgayin joxov

When using the term “representative democracy” we mean free and fair elections, freedom of thought, speech and assembly, independent media, checks and balances of power, rule of law, peace and dignified life.

The Armenian National Assembly has a gender balanced delegation to the IPU with equal numbers of women and men parliamentarians. This is a commitment our parliament has implemented and a principle the IPU has always observed. The Armenian MPs are members of the IPU standing committees and are doing their utmost to voice the problems that are of concern, and sharing their experience in different areas.

Currently there are more women and young MPs in the National Assembly than ever. The parliament is willing to increase the quotas set up in the Electoral Code for women.

The Parliament of Armenia is actively working on the nationalization of the SDG agenda and implementation of open parliament mechanisms.

© Murad Tovmasyan HH azgayn ioxov



Contribution from Austria

What began 130 years ago as a small group of parliamentarians dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue, has since grown into a global organization of national parliaments. This unique institution, with nearly 180 members, has brought together parliamentarians from all over the world, representing manifold political views, traditions, cultures and religions. Building on this diversity, the IPU Members have always managed to continue dialogue, learn from each other and exchange views even in the most turbulent times. They have defined the core principle of their Organization: to promote, protect and strengthen democracy around the world, and mandated the IPU to focus on strengthening parliaments, promoting gender equality, protecting human rights, promoting peace and stability, bringing forward sustainable development, increasing parliaments' role in global affairs and encouraging youth participation.

Our children will have to take up the challenges we have not been able to solve, and we are convinced that they will be able to do so. However, we will have to equip them with the right tools to help them build their future.

Anniversaries are not only a good occasion to look back but also to look ahead. We believe it is paramount to focus on the young generation. Our children will have to take up the challenges we have not been able to solve, and we are convinced that they will be able to do so. However, we will have to equip them with the right tools to help them build their future. The Austrian Parliament attaches great importance to youth participation and has developed initiatives to promote democracy and interest in politics among children and young people.

Starting in October 2007, the Austrian Parliament initiated the Democracy Workshop: an educational programme designed as an interactive workshop and experimental platform offering different approaches to political topics. The legislative changes of 2007, which were aimed at lowering the voting age from 18 to 16, and the findings of several studies showing an increase in political apathy among young people, were some of the reasons behind the programme. In addition, there was a growing consensus that alongside its traditional functions of legislation and governance, Parliament should also play a leading role in providing transparency regarding political processes and decisions.

The Democracy Workshop and the Parliament's online platform for children, the Democracy Webshop, were established, along with the biannual Youth Parliaments for Ninth Grade students, and guided tours of the parliament building for children and young people. In 2015, the programme was extended by an offer specifically created for apprentices including workshops, guided tours and its own youth parliament for apprentices.





Nearly all of the 183 members of the National Council have been involved at some time in the Democracy Workshop, for example as interview partners or experts and thereby have been in direct contact with over 100,000 young people so far.

The aim of the Youth Parliament is to kindle an interest in democratic decision-making processes and impart a greater understanding of parliamentary procedures to young people. They have to campaign for their own position in the parliamentary group, seek solutions through compromise, prepare speeches and finally vote on a draft bill. In committee and plenary sessions, they can experience what it is like to be a politician and how political decisions are made.

The Parliament's online platform for young people offers a wide range of subjects that can be effectively incorporated into school lessons, as well as a specific section for pupils with a native language other than German, with exercises that combine language training and information on Austria and its political system. With more than one million visitors in 2018, the parliament's online offer is a valuable resource.

We are convinced that the best investment in the future is to empower our children, and we hope the initiatives outlined above are a valuable contribution.

Happy anniversary, IPU! May you exist for another 130 years, as a forum for dialogue and for exchange of innovative ideas - with the support of a dedicated, well-informed young generation.



Contribution from Austria

© Parlamentsdirektion / Raimund Appel

Contribution from Bahrain

We extend our sincere congratulations to the IPU on the occasion of its 130th anniversary. We commend the IPU's role in supporting parliaments, promoting democratic practices and capacity-building, defending human rights, supporting SDGs and other vital topics.

Based on the principles of the reform project, National Action Charter, which was approved by the Bahraini people with a rate of 98.4 per cent, the Kingdom of Bahrain has succeeded in delivering many parliamentary achievements.

Today, 130 years after the establishment of the IPU, we can say that the exercise of legislative and oversight functions by parliaments is one of the most important ways to contribute to the development of societies, and to deal with issues that might undermine the internal security and stability of States and the preservation of human rights.

We would like to commend the considerable efforts taken by Presidents of the IPU since its establishment. We believe that the IPU and parliamentarians should take a range of measures and actions that will contribute to developing the IPU's effectiveness:

- Work to achieve balance and integration between maintaining security and promoting the exercise of human rights principles, through international treaties and conventions that emphasize these rights, and place them in an international legal framework.
- Follow up with the members of the legislative and parliamentary councils in amending and developing local legislations in line with the international conventions and treaties.
- Develop plans and programmes to motivate people to exercise their political rights and to contribute freely to the selection of elected members of free and transparently-elected legislatures, guided by successful experiences in countries including the Kingdom of Bahrain, which has succeeded in achieving a qualitative and successful democratic transition in this regard.
- Adopt an initiative with the international community to put an end to wars and conflicts, and to eliminate radical terrorist groups.
- Take effective action in addressing humanitarian tragedies around the world.

The Shura Council and Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain are proud of our active and positive contribution to the IPU, and in participating in various conferences, meetings, membership of its committees, and in its regional and international programmes since the formation of both Councils in 2002.

Based on the principles of the reform project, National Action Charter, which was approved by the Bahraini people with a rate of 98.4 per cent, the Kingdom of Bahrain has succeeded in delivering many parliamentary achievements, notably:

- Achieving more effective participation in politics more effectively. Parliamentary elections in the Kingdom of Bahrain have witnessed a high participation rate of 67 per cent, and the rate of new members has reached 92.5 per cent.
- The election of Ms. Fawzia Abdulla Zainal as Speaker of the Council of Representatives, the election of six female members to the Council of Representatives and the appointment of nine female members to the Shura Council. The current percentage of Bahraini women parliamentarians in the legislative authority is 18.75 per cent.
- Discussing and approving the government's action plan prior to its work, in addition to the numerous oversight and legislative tools that have confirmed the effective role of the legislative authority in the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- Developing mechanisms of communication with public opinion and citizens, spreading the culture of parliamentary work among all segments of society, using social and electronic channels of communication, and supporting the role of parliamentary media.
- Transformation of legislative and oversight work to a comprehensive electronic approach.

We wish the IPU every success in spreading democracy, security and peace throughout the world, and hope that its activities and the role it plays will receive the appreciation it deserves as a parent organization for the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy worldwide.



مجلس النواب

Contribution from Bangladesh

Parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh nurtures the values of the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

We hope the IPU will continue to play an instrumental role in fortifying democracy, the rule of law and sustainable development, and encouraging parliamentarians to deliver the pledges made to their people.

We believe parliamentarians need to unite under the umbrella of the IPU and come together to address common challenges and, in the coming years, to look at ways to assess inequalities and ensure the needs of the poor and marginalized are addressed at all levels of decision-making.

No society is immune from terrorism in the world today. It is therefore necessary for IPU Member Parliaments to commit to do their utmost to prevent terrorism.

"Bangladesh has consistently pursued an independent non-aligned foreign policy promoting friendship with all countries of the world on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states."

The theme of the general Debate of the 141st Assembly of the IPU is: "Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms and the contribution of regional cooperation". Since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the country has emphasized the principle of "Friendship to all, malice to none". Attending the United Nation General Assembly on 17 September 1974 for the first time, our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said: "Bangladesh has consistently pursued an independent non-aligned foreign policy promoting friendship with all countries of the world on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states."

Member Parliaments can take pragmatic measures at national and international levels to reduce inequality and restore human dignity in social, political and economic areas. The IPU has made a clarion call to parliaments across the globe to take measures to protect the political system from influence of organized lobbies, and work to end inequality and promote human rights. It should enforce these measures to enhance transparency and strengthen anti-corruption legislation.

We hope that, in the coming years, the IPU will provide spaces for the engagement of IPU Members with their governments with a view to supporting success in terms of poverty elimination, female empowerment, jurisdiction and political problems, logistics and climate change. Parliaments should consider advocating for a fairer representation of the interests of

developing countries in the institutions of global economic and financial governance. Together with the IPU, all Member Parliaments should work to end child trafficking and make every effort to protect the fundamental rights of children.

Bangladesh is rapidly progressing in terms of women's involvement in political empowerment, education and economic affairs; it has secured the top position in South Asia in reducing gender disparity. As Speaker of Bangladesh, Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury worked for the political empowerment of women in creating a gender-sensitive parliament which responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and work. The Bangladesh Parliament also promotes youth parliamentarians and is changing legislation with the aim of nurturing the path for future leadership.

Bangladesh hosted the 136th IPU Assembly in Dhaka in April 2017. MPs from all over the world witnessed firsthand the country's advances in democracy and development in various sectors. Bangladesh has proven its ability to become a fast-growing economy through its achievements in gender parity, life expectancy and child mortality reduction.

It is our firm conviction that through our concerted efforts we can make a positive difference in realizing the common aspirations of the people. We believe that the upcoming Assembly will be a milestone in promoting our collective endeavour to bring about "a better tomorrow for all".

© Bangladesh Parliament



Contribution from Belarus

Founded in 1889, the IPU has grown into a global structure comparable to the United Nations. Its goal is to promote the development of inter-parliamentary relations, democratic institutions and multidisciplinary international cooperation. The date of the founding of the IPU – 30 June – is celebrated as the International Day of Parliamentarism.

Today, the IPU rightfully plays a central role in promoting comprehensive inter-parliamentary cooperation as the oldest and most influential universal platform for parliamentarians to interact with each other. It is symbolic for us that the first visit to Belarus by the President of the IPU, Gabriela Cuevas Barron, took place in the year of the Organization's 130th anniversary.

We in Belarus highly value the role of the IPU in the development of parliamentarism. Thanks to the efforts of the IPU, parliaments are given the opportunity to build mutually respectful,

equal relations. There is every reason to call the IPU the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations. We hope that the IPU will continue constructive and substantive work in close cooperation with all Member Parliaments in the interests of the global parliamentary community.

Today, in a difficult international environment, parliamentary dialogue is more important than ever. The IPU can and should play an important role in ensuring mutual understanding and agreement in the international arena.

We welcome the activities of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, and support the Organization's strategy to further enhance the role of young parliamentarians and to engage in negotiations on The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We also advocate for the fully-fledged interaction of the IPU and the United Nations, especially regarding the fulfillment by States of their obligations under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We are convinced that the Global Parliamentary Report, prepared by the IPU together with the UNDP and containing 28 recommendations for parliaments, governments and civil society, will become an effective tool for the implementation of the functions of parliamentary control and accountability of governments.

It is necessary to continue active involvement in the implementation of the SDGs. Our parliamentarians are actively working on coordination, exchange of experience and partnership for sustainable development. We held the first regional forum of national coordinators of the countries of Europe and the CIS to achieve the SDGs in 2018, and the National Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019.

Members of the Belarus Council of the Republic are regularly elected to positions on IPU bodies from the Eurasia geopolitical group. Members of the Belarusian delegations speak in general discussions on draft resolutions and amend them. In the periods between assemblies, the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of the IPU, answers the questionnaires of the IPU, sends information about its activities and participates in the actions initiated by the IPU.

Today, in a difficult international environment, parliamentary dialogue is more important than ever. The IPU can and should play an important role in ensuring mutual understanding and agreement in the international arena. The decisions of the IPU, as a non-governmental organization, are not binding; however, to increase their significance and influence on the global agenda, roadmaps are needed whose activities would motivate national parliaments to make their own decisions arising from the IPU documents.





Contribution from Belgium

The Belgian Group has been an active member of the IPU since it was founded and has never considered parliamentary democracy to be mundane or straightforward. Democracy is never complete, perfect or even achieved. While we should never lose sight of its basic values, democracy must adapt to a wide range of circumstances to survive and expand.

The IPU is a valuable forum where parliaments can talk to, challenge, inspire and support each other, so that parliamentary democracy can persist and flourish in ever changing contexts.

The Belgian Group believes that the SDGs should be a common thread running through the IPU's work in the years to come. The Belgian Group would like to emphasize that, to implement the SDGs, there should be a division of tasks between domestic political actors, international organizations, multilateral donors, development finance institutions, the domestic public sector, civil society and the private sector. Parliaments are responsible for scrutinizing their governments' progress on this issue, ensuring that the different interests involved are properly balanced, and challenging their governments when problems arise. We are now in the digital era, and so the Belgian Group would like to advocate for digital solutions that could be used as leverage to achieve the SDGs, while also remaining aware to the potential risks associated with these solutions. It is difficult to imagine a better forum for the discussion and fine-tuning of these solutions than the IPU.

The IPU should be embarking on new approaches, but this should not result in the Organization's long established channels being neglected. The IPU is a unique forum where parliamentarians from different countries can engage in frank and open dialogue, with private meetings where required. It is the only forum in which representatives from certain States or regions are still talking to each other, and where fellow parliamentarians try to adopt new ways of finding solutions. Despite the growth in the number of international organizations over the years, parliamentary diplomacy has become no less important – quite the contrary. The Belgian Group is grateful that the IPU is the leading organization within which parliamentary diplomacy and open parliamentary debate are possible at a global level. That is why the Belgian Group very

We are now in the digital era, and so the Belgian Group would like to advocate for digital solutions that could be used as leverage to achieve the SDGs, while also remaining aware to the potential risks associated with these solutions.

much regrets that, in October 2018, the Assembly decided, for the first time in the history of the IPU, that a committee debate – in this case on the human rights of LGBTI people – could not take place. On the contrary, this sort of debate should be encouraged, with embassies from the relevant countries included. It is also a lever for dialogue that we would like to strengthen.

Unfortunately, democratic freedoms and values are threatened in many countries, along with human rights. In several countries parliamentarians are themselves victim to attacks on their rights and freedoms. They need the solid support of their colleagues when they face threats, violence, exclusion from public life, abduction, arbitrary detention and even murder. The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians plays a crucial role in condemning these sorts of cases and providing specific support to parliamentarians whose rights are infringed. The Belgian Group has never failed to condemn each and every one of these cases and will continue to do so.

From its inception, the IPU wanted to show that another world order was possible. One hundred and thirty years later, the IPU is still an excellent forum for exchanging views on dialogue, peace and safeguarding democracy. Waves of populism and extremism are currently spreading at an unprecedented rate. As the world's flagship for parliamentary democracy, the IPU should take up the challenge of reconciling the speed and simplicity of digital and social media with the inevitably complex reality of parliamentary democracy and international relations that are essential in an ever increasingly interconnected world.

© 2008, Guy Goossens Belgian Senate



Contribution from Bhutan

The IPU is one of the oldest parliamentary organizations and is made up of parliaments from around the world which work towards protecting and building global democracy through political dialogue and concrete actions. The Parliament of Bhutan became the 163rd Member of the IPU on 7 October 2013 in Geneva.

In the coming years, the IPU, in collaboration with the Member countries, is expected to enhance awareness levels and develop capacities of parliaments, especially for the younger democracies. We also expect it to develop further open, transparent, representative, non-discriminatory, accountable and effective parliamentary systems and address special needs and strengthen young democratic governance countries by focusing on technical, management, coordination and capacity development of the nation.

Participation in the IPU is very important to parliamentarians as it provides a platform to discuss issues and learn good practices from other parliaments around the world. Bhutan has a young parliament, which is only in its eleventh year. With such a young democracy, we find participation in the IPU very important as it is a platform to learn from other more experienced parliaments.

Bhutan has a young parliament, which is only in its eleventh year. With such a young democracy, we find participation in the IPU very important as it is a platform to learn from other more experienced parliaments.

The Hon. Members of National Council of Bhutan who participate in the IPU have derived immense benefits from the Organization in building dialogue and bringing together parliaments across the world. Further, the Secretary Generals from the Parliament of Bhutan have been Members of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament, where they have learned about the working methods of different parliaments. This helps towards the improvement of our parliamentary services. This consultative body of the IPU helps in securing cooperation between the services of different parliaments.

We define the IPU as an assembly bringing parliaments together to strengthen democracy and achieve peaceful, sustainable development across the world with a commitment towards the global effort to take appropriate and timely action on security, sovereignty, climate change and other regional and global issues.

We look forward to the effective implementation of and compliance with the resolutions and declarations of the IPU General Assembly, its committees and other bodies.



Contribution from Brazil

On the occasion of the celebration of the 130th anniversary of the IPU, it has been an honour for the Brazilian National Congress to be a member of such a prestigious forum. Since 1954, Brazil has actively participated in the work of the Organization, contributing to its purpose towards inter-parliamentary support and the promotion and protection of global democracy and peace.

During the past 65 years, our country has held two prominent positions in the IPU. The Federal Deputy for the state of Rio de Janeiro, Francisco Saturnino Braga, was a member of the Executive Committee from 1957 to 1960, having been appointed Vice-President from 1958 to 1960. Ranieri Mazzilli, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies from 1959 to 1965, was the first non-European to hold the post of President of the IPU, from 1962 to 1967.

In 1958, Rio de Janeiro hosted the 47th Assembly of the IPU. During the forum, Brazil proposed the creation of the American Regional Group of the IPU. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela were the first members of this group. In this initiative lies the origin of the current Latin American and Caribbean Parliament - Parlantino. The 57th IPU Assembly in 1962 took place in Brasília, our capital.

Since 1954, Brazil has actively participated in the work of the Organization, contributing to its purpose towards inter-parliamentary support and the promotion and protection of global democracy and peace.

During its 130 years of existence, the IPU has been of great importance to democracy. In the future, we hope that the Organization will further extend its work, increasing the number of Member countries. The more experiences parliaments and parliamentarians exchange and share among them, the sooner we are likely to achieve the goals of the IPU: cooperation among people and the solid establishment of representative institutions.

Among the problems that affect many countries, there is the issue of gender equality in parliaments. In Brazil, this is a very worrying and problematic matter.

More than 77 million voters in Brazil are women, representing 52.5 per cent of the total 147.5 million voters. However, in the Women in Politics 2017 map, created by the IPU and United Nations Women, Brazil was in 154th position out of 193 listed countries. As of 1 February 2019, Brazil was ranked 133rd.

In recent years, several initiatives to support women's candidacy have been implemented in Brazil, and this has contributed to the gradual increase of female representation in politics. In 1997, the Elections Act determined the reservation of seats for women in the positions of deputies and councilmen. In 2009, it was established that positions should be filled with

a minimum of 30 per cent and a maximum of 70 per cent of citizens of each sex. For the General Elections of 2018, political parties were obliged to allocate at least 30 per cent of the total public resources they receive to the financing of women candidates' campaigns. In addition, public resources must be used to the creation and maintenance of programmes to promote and disseminate women's political participation.

As a result, 77 women parliamentarians were elected for the Chamber of Deputies in 2018, representing a 51 per cent increase over the previous election. In the Legislative Assemblies, there was an increase of 41.2 per cent in relation to 2014, with 161 women elected as state deputies.

Popular pressure from diverse channels of communication and the direct contact of voters with Congressmen via social media have raised a scenario in which interaction between society and parliament must happen on tighter basis. It is inevitable and necessary that we connect with voters using social networks as it is impossible to ignore their place in a virtual and constantly expanding world.

Brazilian parliamentarians are aware of this. Our Congress leads an attempt to reunite the common citizen with parliamentarians by the means of a series of measures. Such initiatives aim to improve communication channels with voters and provide people with better opportunities to express themselves before the legislative power.

Moreover, new ways to enhance this approach are regularly under study at the National Congress, especially in the expectation that artificial intelligence will increasingly be used in a variety of areas, from candidate profiles to the control and transparency of the activities of the National Congress and parliamentarians. We do hope that innovation will strengthen and facilitate the full exercise of representative democracy worldwide in the years to come.

© Pedro França / Senado Agency

Contribution from Bulgaria

Upon its establishment in 1889, the IPU became the first permanent forum for political discussions among parliamentarians from different countries. Its primary goal is peacekeeping and regulation of international law, and its establishment precedes the founding of the biggest government-level organizations – the League of Nations and the United Nations.

It is an honour for the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria to be a part of the IPU. The Bulgarian Parliament has been a member of the Organization since 1896 and its representatives strive to contribute to the accomplishment of its goals.

The biannual meetings of the IPU Assembly and the regional seminars give the Bulgarian Parliament an excellent opportunity for exchange of contacts and opinions among parliamentarians from different countries. The discussions at the Standing Committees of the IPU are particularly valuable as not only legal topics but also strictly specific issues are discussed.

The Bulgarian Members of Parliament are voluntary and motivated members of the Friendship groups with the parliaments of other countries. This promotes a closer and mutually beneficial relationship among parliamentarians, as it helps the arrangement of meetings and discussions in an informal setting. The most important task of the Friendship groups is to strengthen the political dialogue between countries and to contribute to the expansion of cooperation on all levels.

The National Assembly perceives the educational activities aimed at children and young people as particularly important. Effective educational communication is therefore a key element in the Parliament's public relations.

The National Assembly strives to ensure transparency in all its work and activities, as well as broad accessibility to information to all civic groups who might be interested. In 2019 the National Assembly marked 140 years of the convening of the First Bulgarian Parliament – the Constituent Assembly – and the adoption of the First Bulgarian Constitution: the Tarnovo Constitution.

The anniversary was an opportunity for Bulgarian citizens to learn more about the Tarnovo Constitution, about the parliamentary life in Bulgaria and about the people who contributed to the building of a modern Bulgarian State. On the day of the convening of the Constituent Assembly, more than 9,000 citizens visited the National Assembly.

To mark the anniversary, a travelling exhibition called “140 years of the Constituent Assembly and the adoption of the Tarnovo Constitution” visited all district cities of Bulgaria. A national competition to conduct a parliamentary debate for students and undergraduates was organised in order to engage the younger generation in the celebration, with the final debate

held at the Plenary hall at the National Assembly. Nearly 95,000 students from 1,425 schools took part in a “Lesson on Constitution”.

The National Assembly perceives the educational activities aimed at children and young people as particularly important. Effective educational communication is therefore a key element in the Parliament’s public relations. It is addressed primarily to students and undergraduates. The National Assembly prepares educational programmes for its visitors: presentations on the history of parliamentarism in Bulgaria; tours of the building; observation of plenary sittings and sittings of the Parliamentary Committees; plenary sitting simulations and meetings with Members of Parliament from the visitors’ constituency.

The Bulgarian Parliament is a guarantor of transparency of the legislative process. It works under the terms of an open dialogue with the public and has an active policy for providing electors with information on all topics related to the parliament’s powers. The sittings of the National Assembly and of its Committees are broadcast in real time on its website, where there is also a video archive of the plenary sittings. On the same website one can also access published information about every stage of a bill’s discussion, as well as information about parliamentary practice and about the work of the Members of Parliament.

With the financial support of the Operational Programme: “Good Governance 2019”, the National Assembly is executing a project that makes provision for a full review of the transposition and impact of EU directives in legislation. The general public will be granted free access to this information. After the realization of the project, Bulgaria will become the third member state of the EU with a publicly available system for the transposed provisions.

© National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria



Contribution from Burundi

The Parliament of the Republic of Burundi is proud to be a Member of the IPU, the world's great parliamentary family. As representatives of the people of Burundi, we believe our IPU membership affords us a special forum where we can share and exchange experiences with counterparts from across the world. Membership should also enable equality among nations to be encouraged, and through that, solidarity among all people.

The Parliament of Burundi is a full Member of the IPU. It would like to contribute to celebrating the Organization's 130th anniversary by proposing that new elements in future work programmes should aim to make the IPU more representative.

Burundi's population is growing at speed and is predominantly young. Young people should therefore be a force for progress rather than a constraint.

To confront the challenges that some Member Parliaments are facing, we call on the IPU to devote more attention to issues relating to refugees and internally displaced persons, migration, resolving inter-state conflict, preventing and contending with epidemics, contributing to the management of natural disasters and climate change resilience, engaging with civilian disarmament issues, countering small arms and light weapons proliferation, and combating the financing of terrorism throughout the world.

Young people are the future and the cornerstone of development in every nation. Support must therefore continue for parliamentary efforts to enable young people to be involved in political decision making by empowering young parliamentarians and young people in general, and by including a youth perspective in laws and policies. Burundi's population is growing at speed and is predominantly young. Young people should therefore be a force for progress rather than a constraint. Elected office holders in Burundi are very concerned about improving the future for young people, and so raise awareness about creativity and love for one's country. There is a specific programme for young girls at school that focuses in particular on combating early marriage and unwanted pregnancies.

As part of Burundi's work towards a sustainable resolution to decades of bad governance and interethnic conflict since independence, the country opted for a highly inclusive bicameral parliament. This innovation is a good practice that Burundi could share. It is based on observing ethnic equality (60 per cent Hutu and 40 per cent Tutsi in the National Assembly, and equal proportions of Hutus and Tutsis in the Senate), regional balance, a minimum of 30 per cent women in Parliament and the inclusion of three members of the Twa ethnic minority

in each chamber. The Bureaux of the National Assembly and Senate must also be balanced in terms of political persuasion, ethnicity and gender. The Senate has gone further than this and is now close to achieving gender parity.

To further the country's sustainable and comprehensive development, the bicameral Parliament consistently runs a proximity policy involving community development work with members of the public. It is led by Bureaux members with other parliamentarians also taking part. In the same vein, sessions are held to raise public awareness about attitudinal change, self development, peace and security.

Responding to the needs of current generations should not diminish the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs. The IPU should contribute to that aim by enabling parliamentarians to be trained on sustainable development issues. This could be done through programmes that included material on strengthening the capacity of elected representatives in relevant subject areas. In terms of the environment, the IPU's programmes should pursue projects about resolving the challenges of climate change, protecting the environment, and preserving and protecting biodiversity.

We call on the IPU to address good governance by promoting the position and role of parliaments in managing world affairs and combating corruption.

© Gilbert Niyongere, Camaraman et photographie du Sénat



Contribution from Cambodia

The Cambodian Parliament is proud to be a Member of the IPU, the most influential global parliamentary mechanism. Cambodia, an advocate of multilateral diplomacy, is committed to advancing the core values of the IPU, which include equality, inclusiveness, respect, integrity, and solidarity, and would like to add two more values: diversity and respect of sovereignty. We urge all IPU Members to fully embrace these principles at national, regional and global levels.

The IPU has supported national parliaments to acquire and apply the knowledge, tools and good practices necessary to better fulfil their legislative roles and responsibilities for the sake of global peace and development. The vision of the IPU is: “We want a world where every voice counts, where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development.”

“We want a world where every voice counts, where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development.”

Cambodia, for its part, has promoted a multi-racial and socially-inclusive society. Women’s empowerment and gender equality have improved over the years. Our women’s parliamentary caucuses have been dedicated to the empowerment and betterment of women in Cambodia. Our women parliamentarians are the agents of change in our nation-building processes.

Cambodia will continue to value and embrace cultural diversity, respect different opinions and views, and take into consideration diverse interests.

We believe that we cannot have a productive dialogue and effective cooperation unless we show respect to each other and try to understand each other’s point of view.

To promote and implement the values of the IPU, Cambodia has actively participated in the activities and initiatives under the purview of the IPU since it became an official Member in 1997. We have sent high-level delegates to attend IPU Assemblies and related meetings. Cambodia’s voices have been heard and shared among members and friends of the IPU to realise the mission of the IPU: peace, development and democracy.

Cambodia has also taken some leadership roles in the IPU. In October 2009, Cambodia was nominated to be a Member of the Executive Committee for a four-year term; in November 2011, Cambodia was nominated to be a representative of the IPU, attending the 4th High Level Forum on the Effectiveness of Development Assistance in the Republic of Korea. Cambodia was appointed as Vice-President of the IPU from October 2011 to October 2012



© Parliament of Cambodia

and in March 2019, Cambodia, in cooperation with the IPU, organized a regional workshop on “The role of parliament in promoting peaceful and sustainable society in Southeast Asia”.

In terms of joining global efforts to realize the United Nations SDGs, the Cambodian Parliament has been mainstreaming SDGs across parliamentary committees, taking measures to oversee and monitor the progress of the government in implementing the SDGs, and promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnership.

Against the backdrop of rising protectionism, unilateralism, and anti-globalization, it is imperative that we stay united and speak with one voice to advance our common values and interests by standing firm on the principles of openness, inclusiveness, equality, respect, integrity and solidarity. The IPU will remain a key multilateral mechanism in upholding these values, while promoting peace, security, development and democracy.

There is a vital need to continue to strengthen the role of parliaments in solving global issues and challenges such as climate change, poverty, economic inequality, gender inequality, environmental degradation, extremism and terrorism, and water-food-energy security.

We need to further enhance institutional partnership and practical cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations, and with other international institutions such as the World Trade Organization, to ensure that rules-based multilateral trading systems prevail. The IPU should also explore cooperation opportunities with regional mechanisms such as the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and the International Conference of Asian Political Parties.

International cooperation and partnership can be sustained and fostered if all parties respect the core principles of mutual respect, understanding, non-interference, equal sovereignty, and the respect of international law. Democracy and human rights should not be used as geopolitical or geostrategic instruments, but instead as means to genuinely serve the wellbeing and dignity of the people. Democracy must serve the people for peace and development.



Contribution from Canada

"As we celebrate the IPU's 130th anniversary, the IPU's motto: "For Democracy. For Everyone." has never been more important, or represented a more powerful ideal. We, its members, must recommit to ensuring the continued relevance of this unique institution and continually strive to focus our work on addressing the needs and aspirations of the people we represent."

Hon. David McGuinty, P.C., M.P., President, Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The year 2020 marks the 120th anniversary of Canadian parliamentarians' participation at IPU Assemblies. Senator Raoul Dandurand's attendance at the 1900 IPU Assembly in Paris was the start of both his 37-year involvement with the Organization and the Parliament of Canada's engagement with fellow parliamentarians around the world. Over the course of his remarkable career, Senator Dandurand would go on to establish the Canadian Group of the IPU and act as its first president before becoming the first Canadian member of the IPU Executive Committee.

One hundred and twenty years later, Senator Dandurand's legacy continues. Today, Canadian parliamentarians recognize more than ever the importance of global cooperation and inter-

"...I came away from the conference with the feeling that this organization can and does have an effective place in the affairs of the world. Its greatest function is that it provides an important forum for peace-loving forces of all nations in the struggle for peace."

parliamentary dialogue. What began as a single trip in 1900 has blossomed into an extensive programme of inter-parliamentary engagement. In 2018–19, the Parliament of Canada sent more than 300 parliamentarians abroad as part of 72 delegations to 41 different countries.

The Parliament of Canada's participation in the IPU is an important part of its international engagement activities. Since 1900, nearly 400 Canadian parliamentarians have participated in an IPU Assembly. Canada has hosted four IPU Assemblies: in 1925, 1965, 1985 and most recently in Quebec City in 2012. The 1965 Assembly in Ottawa marked the first time that women

parliamentarians were included in the Canadian delegation; since that time, nearly 60 Canadian women parliamentarians have participated in IPU Assemblies. There are 11 Canadians who have served on the IPU Executive Committee, while many others have filled roles on IPU committees and other bodies or acted as rapporteurs for IPU resolutions.

Canadians have also taken part in many of the IPU's achievements over the years. Canada has advanced IPU resolutions on the protection of the rights of the child (Budapest, 1989), democracy and the expression of ethnic diversity (Yaoundé, 1992), supporting the worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines (Beijing, 1996), access to health as a basic right for women and children (Kampala, 2012) and achieving a nuclear-free world (Geneva, 2014). Canadian delegates have promoted institutional change at the IPU to encourage the Organization to better address ongoing concerns. Canadians drafted an early text that led to the creation of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and proposed an amendment to the IPU Statutes to ensure female representation on the IPU Executive Committee.

This record is a testament to Canada's active participation in pursuing issues of critical global importance through the IPU. Throughout its history, the IPU and its members have demonstrated the courage to address difficult, contentious topics, engage in honest debate and promote ideas that advance the cause of international peace and security. It is this courage that has made the IPU a vital and unique international institution that has won the support of generations of Canadian parliamentarians; in some cases, even winning over sceptics like Senator Alfred Johnson Brooks, who remarked following his return from the 1963 IPU Assembly:

"What is the benefit of an international parliamentary union? ...My first impression was that it was a sort of glorified debating society which had no real executive purpose. However, I soon learned differently, and I came away from the conference with the feeling that this organization can and does have an effective place in the affairs of the world. Its greatest function is that it provides an important forum for peace-loving forces of all nations in the struggle for peace."

As the IPU marks its 130th anniversary, the Canadian Group hopes that the Organization and its Members will reaffirm this commitment to open debate in the pursuit of international peace. The IPU must continue to be a forum for discussing the most pressing issues of the day, confronting differences of opinion head-on, and striving to build consensus towards a more peaceful world.

For its part, the Canadian Group commits to continuing to advocate for the principles that define Canada and its Parliament. Promoting respect for transparency, diversity, human rights, gender equality, democracy and the rule of law have been hallmarks of the Canadian approach to the IPU and will continue to be in the future. The Canadian Group hopes to continue the important work of the Organization together with its fellow parliaments in a spirit of inclusion and openness and looks forward to the next 130 years of the IPU.



Contribution from Chile

It is a great honour to participate in IPU Assemblies and related meetings, especially at such a relevant and significant moment as the Organization's 130th anniversary.

Without doubt, the IPU is the most important organization in the parliamentary sphere. The principles that inspired its founders, Frédéric Passy and William Randal Cremer, are not only still valid but increasingly important in a globalized world confronting new, urgent challenges.

The IPU's commitment to promoting peace and international cooperation through global political and parliamentary dialogue is a highly appropriate approach to the current challenges facing humanity.

A milestone for the IPU was the cooperation agreement signed with the United Nations and its bodies, which has enabled us to enter into high-level discussions on issues of global importance.

This close collaboration is a clear demonstration of the ideology of the IPU, whose membership is today composed of 179 national parliaments and 13 regional parliamentary bodies which, with the United Nations, strive for world peace and security, particularly in relation to the Middle East, international trade, strengthening democracy and democratic institutions, and unconditional respect for human rights, as well as counter-terrorism.

At the time of writing, Chile had taken on the enormous task of organizing the COP 25 Climate Change Conference in December 2019.

As we commemorate 130 years since the founding of the IPU, it is gratifying to see significant progress on gender issues, on awareness of the effects of climate change and on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – setting out ambitious and essential economic, social, political and environmental commitments for the fair and dignified survival of future generations.

Today we are facing one of the biggest challenges on record and in human memory: the imminent consequences of climate change caused by unregulated development based on overconsumption of the planet's scarce resources. At the time of writing, Chile had taken on the enormous task of organizing the COP 25 Climate Change Conference in December 2019, which meant focusing all our efforts on reaching the necessary consensus to adopt urgent measures and start curbing the serious effects of climate change in areas such as the environment, human health, forced migration and the rural economy.

We are currently facing a challenge of civilizational proportions. The changes associated with new information technologies and their use in the development of robotics, the automatization of work and artificial intelligence at once promise and threaten to have a profound impact

on our way of life. Although they will certainly create opportunities for added value and advanced service delivery, they also bring risks in terms of their potential to replace workers and transform the nature of some sectors. This requires us to come up with strategies to harness technological potential for human development and, at the same time, adapt people's capacities and skills to the new reality of the labour market.

In the immediate future we are facing some daunting tasks, like ascertaining what the people we represent really think and want, if we are to take strides towards a more prosperous future characterized by a better level and quality of life, respect for the values embodied by democracy and humanity, greater inclusivity of all the groups that make up our societies, more transparency, accountability and other achievements that make our institutions – including our parliaments and national congresses – closer to the people and more credible, which is vital for republican democracy.

For all these reasons, the IPU has been and continues to be an unparalleled and hugely strategic forum for parliaments worldwide to engage in dialogue and exchange experiences.

The IPU is undoubtedly an institution with a rich and successful 130-year history. But it is above all a global institution with huge future potential and responsibility to contribute to safeguarding peace and democracy and to achieving sustainable and fair development for the whole of humanity.

Let us use this anniversary to renew our commitment to the objectives that have guided the IPU throughout its long history.

© Rainer Lesniewski / Shutterstock.com



Contribution from Chile

Contribution from China

Given the increasingly changing dynamism of the international balance of power and growing global challenges in today's world, it has been the trend of our times to bring more fairness and justice into the international order and the global governance system. as it has been what the development of human society demands and what all countries long for. Changes to the global governance system should better manifest the evolving international landscape and further balance the wills and interests of the majority of countries, emerging markets and developing countries in particular.

Never have better conditions been created for us to head for peace and development together. However, mounting unilateralism and protectionism have challenged the international order and the global governance system. Our world is calling for multilateralism and stronger international organizations more urgently than ever. The IPU is the largest international parliamentary organization with the most time-honoured history and greatest influence. The National People's Congress of China attaches great importance to and respects the status and roles of the IPU. It is our hope that the IPU will better unite parliaments around the world, uphold win-win cooperation, fairness and justice, and play a leading role in maintaining world peace, promoting common development, and especially in deepening global cooperation and meeting global challenges.

As clearly stipulated in the Chinese Constitution, "all power of the People's Republic of China belongs to its people"; it is the nature and core of the People's Congress System that all state power being vested in the people.

The People's Congress System is the regime of China, and it is the fundamental political system to safeguard the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the people's status as masters of the country and the rule of law. In September 1954, the founders of the People's Republic of China, together with over 1200 deputies to the National People's Congress elected in a general election, held the first meeting of the 1st National People's Congress, during which the

Constitution of the People's Republic of China was adopted. From then on, the People's Congress System, the fundamental political system of China, has been established. In a country like China with a history of more than 5,000 years and a population of around 1.4 billion, the creation of such a new type of political system enabling people to govern the country is of epoch-making significance, not only to the political history of China, but also to that of the whole world.

As clearly stipulated in the Chinese Constitution, "all power of the People's Republic of China belongs to its people", it is the nature and core of the People's Congress System for all state power being vested in the people. The National People's Congress and local People's Congresses at all levels are organs through which people exercise their power. Through general elections, people elect their deputies to form People's Congresses at all levels, which in turn, answer for the people and subject to their supervision. Executive, supervisory, judicial and procuratorial branches are elected by People's Congresses at the same levels, and thus are responsible for and supervised by them.

There are over 2.62 million deputies to the five tiers of People's Congresses, namely at the national, provincial, municipal, county and township levels. They represent 1.4 billion Chinese people to exercise the state power. Standing Committees, as permanent bodies, are established for People's Congresses above county level. People's Congresses and their Standing Committees hold the following powers: First, legislative power. The National People's Congress and its Standing Committee exercise the legislative power by formulating and amending the Constitution and other laws. Local People's Congresses and their Standing Committees with legislative power make local legislation in keeping with laws. Second, supervisory power. They supervise the implementation of the Constitution, laws and regulations as stipulated in the Constitution and laws. It is also their responsibility to supervise the work of the State Council, the National Supervisory Commission, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate. Third, decision power on major State issues. In keeping with the Constitution and laws, they discuss and decide upon major issues nationwide or within their administrative areas. Fourth, power to appoint and remove officials. Government officials and civil servants at the same levels are elected or appointed by them, as the Constitution and laws provide. Meetings of the People's Congresses and Standing Committees are held in line with legal procedures to ensure power is exercised collectively through group discussions and voting in a democratic and orderly way.

Over the past 60 years since the launching of the People's Congress System, it has shown significant organizational effectiveness and institutional strength in the development of the Communist Party of China and the nation. It has united and mobilized all Chinese people to take part in the socialist modernization as masters of the country; by unleashing and giving full play to their enthusiasm, initiatives and creativity. It has effectively regulated the relationship between state institutions, between central and local authorities and between all ethnic groups, so as to ensure all undertakings nationwide are carried out in a unified and effective way. The strength of the socialist system is thus evidenced by how people are able to make concerted efforts to achieve a common goal. It has enabled the formation and improvements of a socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics with the Constitution at its core, which embodies 273 acting laws, more than 700 administrative regulations and over 12,000 local regulations. All undertakings in China have been since launched and implemented according to laws and regulations formulated by People's Congresses and respective Standing Committees, which means all work is governed by law. Thanks to the People's Congress System, we have consecutively set up and implemented 13 Five-Year Plans for National Economy and Social Development, making incredible achievements in economic and social development.

© QGRDSTB_BJIAN / NPC of China



Contribution from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The IPU aims to be a platform for dialogue and for searching out solutions that will benefit parliamentary institutions, States and humankind. The organizational and functional principles on which parliaments draw are defined by the IPU. It provides parliaments with all the intellectual tools needed to run democratic life and protect the public.

Our vision for the future of the IPU is about capitalizing on all its current standard-setting and institutional rights and obligations; it is also about intensifying work on the ground to develop and strengthen democracy and the protection of human rights; and it is a vision of a more peaceful world. To strengthen our interparliamentary organization, the Members of the IPU must continue to work on the project of transforming the IPU into a true world parliament. Having that status would allow the IPU to act with greater latitude and its decisions would therefore have greater impact on parliamentary work and State governance.

To strengthen our interparliamentary organization, the Members of the IPU must continue to work on the project of transforming the IPU into a true world parliament.

As an organization of parliaments, the IPU should strengthen its commitment to building the capacity of its Members so that they become more successful and resilient. As the very pillars on which the IPU's work rests, parliaments should be able to fulfil their roles comprehensively and achieve their objectives. As parliamentarians, we should commit to prioritizing the quest for solutions to problems that threaten our respective societies, strengthening democracy, defending human rights, maintaining peace and security throughout the world, and fighting climate change. All IPU Members should be committed to implementing the resolutions, recommendations and all decisions adopted by IPU Assemblies.

To become more representative, Congolese parliamentarians have adopted legal provisions in the standing orders of both chambers that require all political movements with seats in parliament to be represented in the bodies of both chambers. Observing this principle has allowed the Senate and National Assembly to include representatives of the majority as well as the opposition in all their committees. Sections of the population are represented partly through regular engagement between parliamentarians and communities and partly by taking account of people's aspirations in parliamentary work. Parliament works transparently by holding plenary debates in public and broadcasting them on the radio and national television.

ongco



Contribution from Costa Rica

The Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Costa Rica congratulates the IPU on its hard work, performed during 130 years, which is reflected in its growing membership, in the input to accomplish its objectives, the efforts to serve as a liaison between parliaments of the world, and as a meeting point in a global network of the best democratic practices.

In recent years, the Costa Rican Parliament has created an E-Parliament and has made a commitment with our citizens to improve information access to the legislative work. Moreover, we have pledged to be more transparent, making matters of the institution known to the public, such as the salaries of the Members of the Parliament and the legislative staff, annual budgets, purchases made by the Supply Department, and dissemination of data and parliamentary work.

In recent years, the Costa Rican Parliament has created an E-Parliament and has made a commitment with our citizens to improve information access to the legislative work.

Likewise, a great deal has been done to improve citizens' access to the legislative work performed by our parliamentarians by means of the transmission of legislative sessions using digital platforms and national television, as well as forums and conferences.

We are proud of the Department of Citizens' Participation of the Legislative Assembly which promotes the interaction of the Parliament with citizens. This office was established several years ago, and it permits that Costa Ricans may present their own law initiatives which are shared by all parliamentarians in order to analyse their purpose. If deemed relevant, they are signed by the parliamentarians to make them part of the legislative agenda.

In the future, we would like to see the IPU make its presence feel more strongly in all continents, by means of rotary meetings that permit parliamentary representations of different regions to share challenges and best practices.

Second, the IPU shall continue leading its objectives, not just for parliamentarians to interact with each other, but also that all citizens are aware of the IPU's work.

The work of the IPU will benefit from the establishment of agreements with other multilateral organizations, creating effective spaces to work collaboratively, as it does with the United Nations.

Finally, we want to reiterate the commitment of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica to the IPU advances which encourage us to strengthen work, cooperation and friendship ties with parliaments of democratic and peaceful nations of the world, leading our efforts to build a more prosperous development of all nations.





Contribution from Croatia

The IPU is the oldest multilateral organization in the world. This fact alone speaks for itself when it comes to a tradition of promoting democratic governance and values, working with parliaments and parliamentarians to achieve a more stable and inclusive world.

The scope of activities is impressive: human rights, peace, democracy, gender equality, youth empowerment and sustainable development.

We would also like to commend the activities of the current leadership of the IPU: The President, Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron and the Secretary General, Mr. Martin Chungong.

The achievements of the IPU are numerous. The Resolution on achieving universal health coverage by 2030 adopted during the latest Assembly is a milestone in international efforts to reduce mortality, illnesses and other health-related problems around the world.

There are many new challenges in the twenty-first century, although some remain the same: war, crimes against humanity and genocide. The Republic of Croatia suffered severe consequences of war at the end of the last century and therefore understands the problems of war through its own experience. To ensure a stable international order we must insist on upholding the international law and working together to implement it wherever we can.

In recent years, the Costa Rican Parliament has created an E-Parliament and has made a commitment with our citizens to improve information access to the legislative work.

One of the particular issues that IPU is dealing with is youth empowerment. Here, we would like to mention the role of the former Croatian MP, Ms Marija Lugarić in establishing the Forum of Young Parliamentarians in 2010.

The work of the IPU on achieving the SDGs is also of immense importance.

The future of our planet is at risk. Therefore, we would like to see more activity in this area, especially within the framework of the geopolitical groups. More frequent and more detailed discussions will be the parliamentary contribution to the sustainable future of the world.

These issues, along with gender equality, are of great importance to our parliamentarians and are included in the regular parliamentary discussions. They are dealt with by different parliamentary bodies, and our Parliament also organizes round tables on various topics, such as SDGs, gender equality and human rights.

The added value of the IPU is its non-aggressive way of doing things and the inclusion of all countries and societies. This is something that makes the IPU respected throughout the world. Therefore, we would like to see a more visible IPU in the future; an IPU that is immediately recognized by a wider population. More intense work and discussion on the crucial issues such as SDGs and universal health coverage is the way to greater visibility. Its influence should be felt in every corner of the world.

It is not an easy task, but it is the responsibility of the Organization to continue to enhance and strengthen the parliamentary dimension of governance.



© Croatian Parliament

Contribution from Croatia

Contribution from Cuba

The IPU is a solid organization with a long history marked by the promotion of the most genuine democratic values. Its strategies encourage the exchange of views and the search for best experiences for parliaments to acquire and use the knowledge, tools and good practices to fulfil their legislative duties and responsibilities and better cope with today's complex world.

It helps us to promote democratic commitment to our people and the desire to bequeath a better world for coming generations, so they enjoy a full life free from adversity and fear.

The IPU's primary goal should be to achieve unity; combining efforts to find common solutions to the most pressing needs of world citizens, and overcome conflicts in strict observance of the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

The Cuban system is based on participatory democracy and the sovereign power of the people, which is the sole source and carrier of State power. In Cuba, the people propose, nominate and elect their representatives by free, equal, direct and secret ballot, with no political party mediation.

In Cuba, the people propose, nominate and elect their representatives by free, equal, direct and secret ballot, with no political party mediation.

The Members of the National Assembly of the People's Power take on that mandate voluntarily and shall regularly render accounts of their dealings to voters, who can revoke them should they feel that those Members are no longer worthy of joining the Cuban Parliament.

Greater citizenship participation is encouraged in lawmaking, popular consultations and other forms of democratic participation, to ensure greater transparency and accountability in government and administrative management, as well as providing solutions to communities' everyday problems and in the fundamental decisions for the development of the country.

There is also a political will to increase the number of young people in political and public office positions; with no discrimination whatsoever and ensure gender-sensitive and gender-balanced access to the democratic process.

In the future, we would like to see the IPU preserve the objectivity of its founding principles in the struggle for peace, fraternity, justice and solidarity.

The IPU can play an essential role in this crucial time for human survival if it upholds its efforts to defend and preserve multilateralism; the respect for the rights of people to choose their economic,

politic and social system freely and sovereignly with no foreign interference; the respect for diversity, independence; the self-determination of States and non-interference in their domestic affairs.

It can advance the achievement of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda to solve poverty and development-related problems that are inextricably linked to peace. There can be no peace without development and no development without peace; they are interrelated and indissoluble.

We also believe that the IPU should aggressively combat the lack of political will to find solutions to the serious crises that bring about chaos and instability with their sequel of hunger, poverty and diseases. It should work towards international peace and security for the safety of all.

© Tony Hernandez Mena



Contribution from Cuba

Contribution from Cyprus

As the international landscape transforms, the successful organizations of the future will be those that can move faster, learn and adapt more quickly and embrace challenges.

Counting 179 Member Parliaments and successfully becoming the United Nations' parliamentary dimension, the IPU is celebrating 130 years since its foundation and continues to serve the legacy of its co-founders, William Randal Cremer and Frédéric Passy.

The participation of the Cyprus House of Representatives in the IPU provides the House, as well as all other Member Parliaments around the world, with the opportunity to constantly identify and upgrade its position on the global political scene, in a framework of the principles and values of democracy.

...the "Parallel Parliament" aspires to stimulate society regarding global developments and challenges and to activate citizens to get involved themselves.

The power of cooperation both defines the IPU and is a shared commitment between its Member Parliaments. The Cyprus House of Representatives has in recent years established trilateral cooperation mechanisms involving key players in our region with a view to further enlarging this effort to other countries in the wider region. These trilateral partnerships have as their common goal the promotion of regional stability and development, for the benefit of our people and the region at large.

Identifying the need to make Parliament a familiar and accessible place to our citizens, the House of Representatives has established a new institution: the "Parallel Parliament"

The "Parallel Parliament" aims to develop an interactive relationship with the public in order to strengthen citizenship, participatory democracy, pluralism and transparency. In particular, acting as a driving force in society's best interests, the "Parallel Parliament" aspires to stimulate society regarding global developments and challenges and to activate citizens to get involved themselves. In this way, progress and development can be achieved at all levels: political, economic, social and cultural.

The "Parallel Parliament" will operate under the following themes:

1. Research, Innovation and e-Governance
2. Culture
3. Environment, Ecology-Sustainability and Health
4. Citizens
5. Children
6. Young Representatives



© House of Representatives of Cyprus

As regards the further promotion of communication between citizens and the legislature, the House of Representatives has also established the “House of the Citizens,” which is an old restored building close to the Parliament building, open to the public, where real dialogue and information exchange may take place.

In the last decade, we have all witnessed enormous changes, at the political, economic and social levels. Governments, parliaments and the IPU are called upon to adapt to these changes, having at their disposal perhaps the most ambitious tool of all times, the Agenda 2030, adopted by the United Nations in 2015. Achieving the 17 SDGs that lie at its heart, and holding governments accountable to their commitments, requires the involvement and determination of parliaments, through the structures of transparency, accountability and inclusivity provided by the IPU.

Consequently, the national parliaments have a pivotal role to play in enhancing regional development through joint initiatives, actions and synergies to achieve the SDGs. To this end, the House of Representatives has initiated the formation of a Middle East Cooperation Centre. Operating as a platform that will bring together parliaments, business people, academic institutions and citizens from Middle East countries, this project aims to generate and share knowledge, ideas, experiences and best practices in fields such as research, innovation, artificial intelligence, technology, energy, the environment, the blue economy, education and culture.

One of the fastest-moving parts of this initiative is the project of disseminating the Arab language and culture in Cyprus through various channels, facilitating mutual respect and understanding with the countries and people in the area.

Cyprus is a bridge of peace, stability, security and cooperation in the wider region. That is why we have been actively involved on an equal basis in the IPU since 1978 and in its work for a world of progress, prosperity, peace and security.

Contribution from the Czech Republic

The Parliament of the Czech Republic has undertaken a long journey towards an open democracy, operated with transparency and effectiveness.

In the year of the 130th anniversary of the IPU, the Czech Republic celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution – a peaceful end to the dictatorship of one party and a restoration of a free and democratic society.

Having had this experience, Czech parliamentarians appreciate the contribution of the IPU to the international humanitarian law, sustainable development and activities enhancing democracy all over the world. Resolutions and recommendations of the IPU are observed and taken into account in the legislation process.

The membership of the IPU provides a platform for free dialogue among nations, cooperation of parliaments in development programmes, exchanging experiences and improving democracy in order to support the well-being of citizens.

The Parliament of the Czech Republic would like to take this opportunity to express a deep appreciation of and sincere congratulations to the IPU.

*Czech parliamentarians
appreciate the contribution of
the IPU to the international
humanitarian law, sustainable
development and activities
enhancing democracy all over
the world.*



Contribution from Denmark

Denmark is a founding Member of the IPU; the Danish Parliament has been represented in the IPU since its foundation in 1889. One of the founders was Danish, and his name was Fredrik Bajer.

Fredrik Bajer (1837–1922) was an officer in the Danish army. In 1864 he saw active service in the war against Prussia and Austria. In the wake of his experiences of armed conflict, he left the army in 1865 and devoted his life to the cause of peace. Among other organizations, he joined The International and Permanent League of Peace, which was set up in 1867 in response to the threat of a war between France and Prussia. Fredrik Bajer continued to work for peace after his election to the Danish Parliament in 1872. In 1889, he helped found the IPU. In 1908, Fredrik Bajer was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his sustained efforts for peace and international cooperation.

Denmark is a founding Member of the IPU; the Danish Parliament has been represented in the IPU since its foundation in 1889.

Entirely in step with the work of Fredrik Bajer, there has always been consistent, broad-based political support in Denmark for international cooperation and multilateral coordinating bodies rooted in international legislation and fair international regulations, such as the United Nations, of which Denmark has been a member since its foundation in 1945. Danish Members of Parliament have been conscientious members of the IPU and the Danish Parliament has hosted three IPU sessions: in 1923, 1964 and 1994.

With its broad membership group, the IPU plays a unique role as the parliamentary counterpart to the United Nations. While the United Nations is primarily run by governments, the IPU represents a wide range of opinions in individual member states and is therefore a constructive parliamentary counterpart to the United Nations. In this respect, the IPU Strategy 2017–2021 underlines the important role of the IPU and national parliaments in bridging the gap between the global and local levels.

The specific role of the IPU and national parliaments is to help diminish the effects of democratic deficit in international relations. Both can contribute specifically to enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the United Nations and encouraging widespread support for important United Nations work.

Since its inception, the IPU has focused on parliamentarians' human rights. This remains a focus area that sadly still demands vigilance on every continent. How can inter-parliamentary cooperation function and develop if parliamentarians in some countries fall victim to abuse?

The focus of the IPU on this issue is unique. No other international organization tackles it in quite the same way. The IPU has successfully made a difference to parliamentarians exposed to suppression, especially since 1976 when the IPU introduced a procedure for processing cases of breach of parliamentary rights and since January 1977 when The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was set up to process such complaints.

For an inter-parliamentary cooperation organization like the IPU, and for Member parliaments, it is crucial that we let no government ever get away with violating the rights of elected parliamentarians unchallenged.

The IPU is – and must continue to be – a driving force in pursuit of the achievement of the United Nation's 17 SDGs. The SDGs that focus on peace, justice and solid representative institutions are obvious goals for an organization like IPU to pursue.

The majority of the remaining sustainable development goals presuppose that international cooperation is effective and binding. While national parliaments must take the lead, a capacity to make binding decisions at the international level is also imperative.

The IPU believes that, with regard to meeting the United Nations goals, including eliminating poverty and hunger, providing more and better jobs, ending inequality and fighting climate change, their achievement is imperative if we are to move towards a fairer, more democratic and peaceful world – which, indeed, is the IPU's key purpose.

For 130 years, the IPU has striven to make the world a more just and peaceful place. Its objectives remain largely unresolved and work must continue. In future years, the IPU must focus also on the United Nation's SDGs, defending parliamentarians exposed to abuse and the IPU's role as a parliamentary branch of the United Nations. However, we must also consider and discuss new issues. The IPU might for instance monitor elections in order to promote free and democratic elections so that consequently all the world's parliaments will come to reflect the will of their respective peoples.

Danish MPs have played an active role in the work of the IPU for 130 years. We will continue to do so!

© David Kahr



Contribution from Djibouti

The Djibouti Group joined the IPU in 1981 and was affiliated until 2006. After a brief period outside the IPU it joined again in 2010. Djibouti defines the IPU as: a foundation for multilateralism reliability where the group effort intends to establish an improved world.

Membership of the IPU has given Djibouti parliamentarians access to support for an efficient parliament which allows the improvement of:

- Gender equality
- Human rights
- Peace consolidation
- Parliamentary dialogue
- Youth empowerment
- Sustainable development
- World governance

To have a stronger parliament which could implement these principles in practice, a convenient mechanism must be implemented which includes assistance in various areas of institutional capacity-building.

The IPU empowers and supports its members to rely on inclusive social fairness and optimum governance to offer all its member country populations the opportunity to live in a democratic State. The Djibouti Group takes responsibility for implementing a sustainable parliamentary diplomacy strategy in order to reach a prosperous and impartially globalized world where multilateralism and inter-parliamentary cooperation are plainly formalized.



The parliament in Djibouti has improved efficiency by increasing:

- the number of young parliamentarians, which now represents 35 per cent of the parliament; and
- the number of women parliamentarians, which now represents 26.15 per cent of the parliament, in order to reach gender equality in the future.

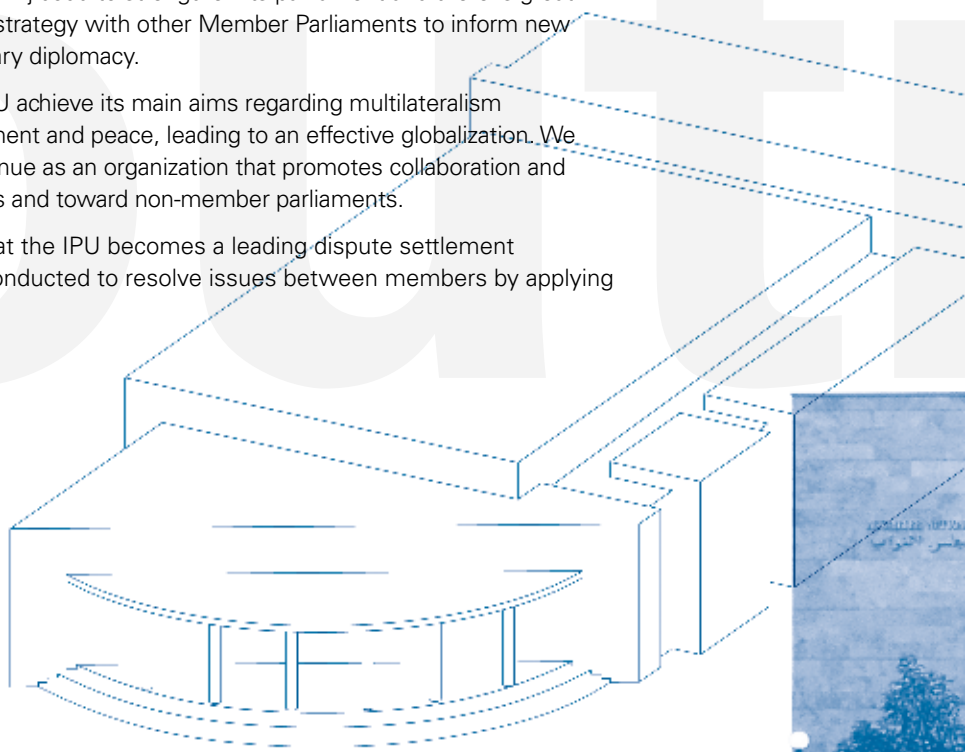
In addition, to promoting the understanding of gender equity and changed attitudes, a focus has been given to women parliamentarians inside all commissions and members of the executive: the second Vice-President of the Parliament is a woman. This increases the opportunity for women to contribute to parliamentary debate and national decisions. These women represent our Parliament regionally, nationally and internationally, and the Djibouti Group is committed to gender equality in order to improve democratic representation.

The Djibouti Parliament organizes a parliamentary ‘caravan’ which goes out once or twice per year to bring the parliament to people in remote areas of the country. Their opinions and requests are collected and submitted to the relevant member of the Government. This exercise is followed up during the next year, where the Parliament evaluates the situation of people living in remote areas and whether requests have been satisfied and issues resolved.

These improvements and tools allow Djibouti to strengthen its parliament and there is great willingness and desire to share this strategy with other Member Parliaments to inform new reforms or strategies for parliamentary diplomacy.

In the future, we hope to see the IPU achieve its main aims regarding multilateralism strengthening, sustainable development and peace, leading to an effective globalization. We look forward to seeing the IPU continue as an organization that promotes collaboration and harmonization between its members and toward non-member parliaments.

Finally, the Djibouti Group hopes that the IPU becomes a leading dispute settlement organization where dialogues are conducted to resolve issues between members by applying a fair dispute resolution process.



Contribution from Ecuador

The National Assembly of Ecuador encourages the IPU to continue working in favour of humanity; the future of the IPU must remain focused on meeting the SDGs, allowing the exchange of experiences between the parliaments of the world, and in this way come closer to achieving a common goal. We trust that the IPU will develop strategies that will cross borders and allow each Member and non-member country to benefit from the work done in the Organization.

The struggle for democracy, development and respect for human rights are issues that increasingly concern our region. Promoting and working according to parliamentary diplomacy must, above all, be the fundamental principle of the international actions of parliaments, and this has characterized the IPU during its 130 years of existence. We extend congratulations to the IPU for the work that it has been carrying out and, as the National Assembly of Ecuador, we encourage the continued commitment of the countries that comprise the IPU to face the challenges of the world, and the special needs of our region.

Breaking prejudices between nations, understanding our histories and bringing our cultures closer, is the path which the IPU should take now and the future...

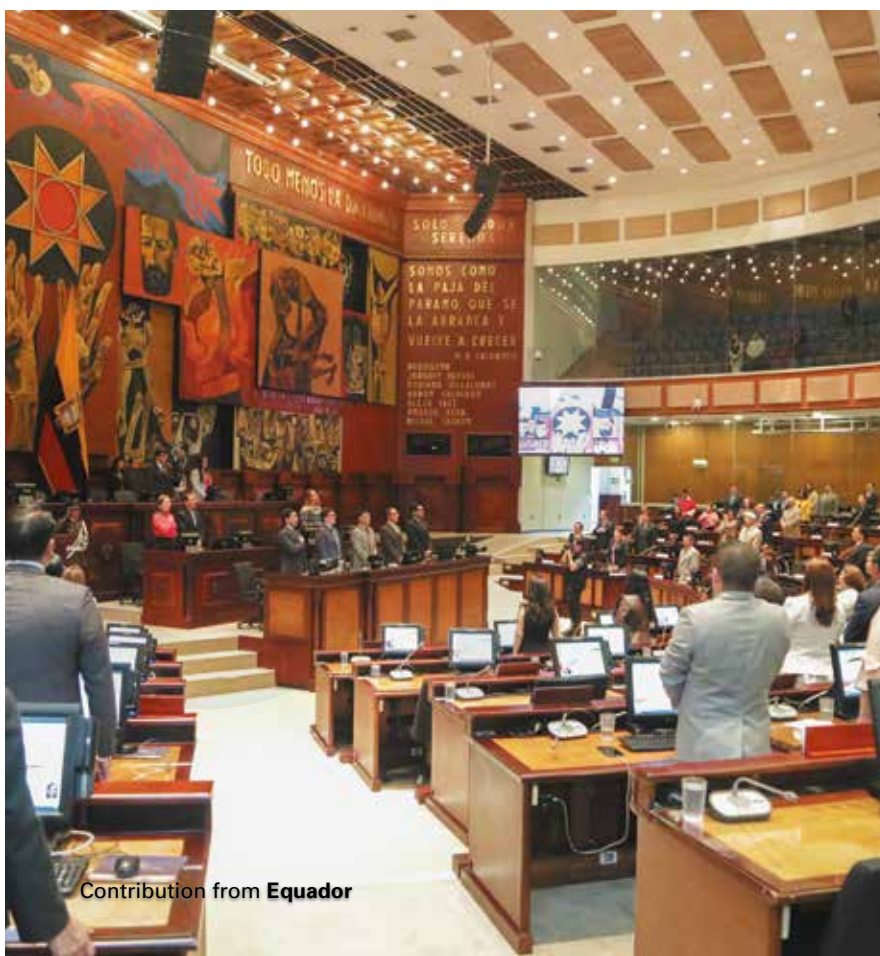
Any integration process will depend fundamentally on the internal efforts of each country; on the spaces they create to establish the reforms or immediate actions in their national legislation, as well as on the effectiveness of their national policies. Breaking prejudices between nations, understanding our histories and bringing our cultures closer, is the path which the IPU

should take now and the future, with an integral vision of human rights based on a principle of universality, enforceability, indivisibility, interdependence and progress.

In Ecuador, the current political landscape demonstrates the existence of dialogue between different sectors of society. The scope for discussion on economic and productive issues has been expanded, as has the search for alternatives to resolve issues related to public debt and the economic crisis, and the call to face all instances of corruption.

At the country level we propose to improve the quality of political representation in the National Assembly to strengthen the democratic legitimacy and promote the transparency of the political exercise. It is essential to strengthen democratic leadership, shared responsibility, deliberative and parliamentary quality and citizen participation, based on public dialogue that is transparent, serious, respectful and designed for the common good.

Following the example of the IPU, our parliamentarians commit themselves to generate spaces for dialogue with various sectors and entities to build national agreements. Promoting the construction of strategic national agreements with creative, inclusive proposals and deepening national dialogue, is important in achieving a full, inclusive and ethical democracy. In this respect, we need to work to achieve greater joint participation with the countries with whom we formed the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries to reinforce the position of the region and pay attention to the most sensitive issues that concern us all.



© N@ndo_lagla

Contribution from Egypt

The Egyptian House of Representatives and the IPU share best practices and mechanisms. This makes the Egyptian Parliament more representative, transparent, open to society and easily accessible. The Egyptian Parliament has adopted a bundle of updated interactive services for the first time in the history of the Egyptian parliamentary course to facilitate communication between the Parliament and citizens through the following mechanisms:

- Launching the House of Representatives WhatsApp service in 2016 in order to communicate with citizens. The service has actively contributed to learning more about the views and suggestions of citizens as well as the problems they face in issues related to parliamentary work. During the first four sessions of the current legislative term, a total of 743,368 messages were received, including 352,149 related to legislative proposals.
- Launching an official channel for the House of Representatives on YouTube in October 2018. The channel is a platform for the digital content of parliamentary media, reflecting the activities and events of the Egyptian Parliament at the legislative and oversight levels, as well as activities in the field of parliamentary diplomacy. The summary of plenary sessions scored highest views in the channel's playlists, followed by the activities of specific standing committees and the activities of parliamentary diplomacy. The age group 25–34 represented the highest viewing group.
- Developing the official website of the House of Representatives and issuing English and French versions. It regularly presents the Parliament's news and activities and provides documented data, information and statistics about the House and the members.
- Issuing a digital periodical entitled "Harvest of the Parliament", published on the official website. It provides a monthly documented monitoring of the House's legislative and oversight activities, as well as all other parliamentary activities. It is also published on the official website of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union. Electronic English and French translated versions are regularly sent to the IPU.
- The adoption of such mechanisms has helped the Parliament to apply the concept of interactive democracy, one of the key determinants which the IPU supports, and urges other parliaments to also implement and respond to this concept, being one of the international benchmarks of the quality of parliaments at work.

We believe that the IPU can develop in the future by:

- Enhancing and strengthening cooperation and coordination between the IPU and the United Nations and its organs, particularly on issues of common concern, such as terrorism, sustainable development and gender equality.
- Establishing a mechanism to follow up the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations of the IPU committees.
- Issuing a monthly bulletin on the most important legislations and parliamentary developments, and circulating it to the IPU Member Parliaments, in a manner that would allow parliaments to benefit from the accumulated experience of each other.
- Paying attention to some of the most critical global issues that pose a potential threat to international peace and security, particularly nuclear security, given the significant role of parliamentarians in this regard.
- Highlighting the issue of parliamentary training for Members of Parliaments and general secretariats. Also providing more technical and logistical support to Member Parliaments in areas related to supporting the legislative capacity of parliaments and enhancing the efficiency of their staff.
- Reviewing and developing self-assessment criteria for parliaments in all areas and sectors of parliamentary work.



Contribution from Equatorial Guinea

We warmly congratulate the IPU family for 130 years of an institution that, over time, has acquired its space and respect in the world context thanks to the Presidents and General Secretaries who have directed it since its creation.

Since the integration of the Parliament of Equatorial Guinea into the IPU, several decades ago, and six years ago, the Upper Chamber (Senate) of the bicameral Parliament of Equatorial Guinea, we have attended, together with members of the Chamber of Deputies, most of the events organized by the IPU. Our experience of these events has been positive, observing the IPU's constant concern for the defence of peace, freedom and democracy as well as the commitment to the integration of women and young parliamentarians.

The hard work done by the IPU requires us to become more aware of the challenges we face and make a deeper commitment to the goals that inspired the IPU's creation. We are dedicated to working towards solving the issues facing the international parliamentary community.

The sensitivity, solidarity and commitment to the defence of democratic values, peace and freedom clearly defines the IPU as an institution that champions the rights and freedoms of parliamentarians around the world. Throughout the time that we have been part of the IPU we have been able to show that our own institutions are sensitive to the issues that plague the world, tabling debates on urgent issues that always lead to a Resolution that defines a solution.

The Parliament of Equatorial Guinea and the Senate of the Republic look forward to working hand in hand with the IPU, strengthening both institutions in the future.

*Throughout the time that
we have been part of the IPU
we have been able to show
that our own institutions are
sensitive to the issues that
plague the world...*



Contribution from Finland

The Parliament of Finland wishes to congratulate the oldest and largest international parliamentary organization in the world: Congratulations IPU on your 130th anniversary!

Finland was not yet an independent country 130 years ago, and not yet a Member of the IPU. However, 2020 marks 100 years of Finnish membership of the Organization. For a small country, taking the first steps as an independent nation a hundred years ago, the IPU was a valuable source of international contacts. It was a forum for parliamentarians to learn the “tricks of the trade” in international politics, and still is. Indeed, many members of the Finnish IPU delegations have later become cabinet ministers, Speakers of Parliament and held other important positions in Finnish and international politics.

In 1906 Finland became the first country in the world to grant full political rights to women. Gender equality is one of the guiding principles in our society.

The two founders of IPU, Frédéric Passy and William Randall Cremer have, in many ways, laid the foundations for multilateral cooperation between nations; they paved the way for the League of Nations and the United Nations decades later. Like many other countries, Finland has a lot to gain from a rules-based international order where trade flourishes and stability brings security. Lack of international rules will only create uncertainty among investors and ordinary citizens. Mistrust between people and countries will spread the seeds of conflict and hamper societal development.

We believe that strong parliaments are at the heart of representative democracy. National parliaments are first and foremost tasked with scrutinizing and supervising the work of their



respective governments and passing budgets and legislation. With 179 Member Parliaments, the IPU offers a unique platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices to carry out peer review, receive new ideas and get support from colleagues. It also gives us the opportunity to build networks and understanding, strengthening our relations with one another.

In 1906 Finland became the first country in the world to grant full political rights to women. Gender equality is one of the guiding principles in our society. In the 2019 parliamentary election, voters elected 46 per cent women in the parliament without any quota system. We believe that, in a representative democracy, parliament should closely mirror society and its aspirations, representing the will of the people as a whole, while respecting the rights of the minorities.

Even though the IPU is the oldest of the international parliamentary organizations and it has to accommodate a large number of different views from its membership, it does not have to get out-of-date. On the contrary, the IPU should evolve with the times. We should constantly consider ways of defending the core values of democracy. We should defend people's belief in the key institutions of free and fair elections and the integrity of the leaders they have elected. Trust of the voters must be earned every day. And regardless of the country's starting level, societies can always be improved, and democracy can always be strengthened.

Finally, with multilateralism under attack in many occasions, we should pay special attention to defending the international rule-based framework instead of undermining it. Even the strongest of unilateral actors benefits from the stability and security of mutually agreed rules. The IPU started this work 130 years ago; let us carry on contributing to its goal.

© Hanne Salonen / Parliament of Finland

Contribution from France

The French Group of the IPU represents both houses of the French Parliament: The National Assembly and the Senate. It is composed of 100 members: 50 deputies and 50 senators. It is jointly chaired by the President of the National Assembly and the President of the Senate. There is also an executive chair who is chosen, every five years, on an alternating basis from among the deputies and senators. Senator Michèle André was chair from 2012 to 2017, followed by deputies Sophie Errante and, since 2017, Hubert Julien-Laferrrière.

British and French parliamentarians founded the IPU. The French Group of the IPU is therefore strongly attached to the institution's founding values of defending peace and promoting parliamentary democracy. Keen to anchor the IPU in the struggles of our time, we unreservedly support the efforts of the IPU to achieve the SDGs and address climate change – France hosted the parliamentary meeting on the sidelines of the COP 21 Climate Change Conference – as well as promoting gender equality.

By joining the IPU, parliaments have agreed to uphold without reservation, according to their own procedures, the universal values of peace and respect for human life.

The IPU was born in 1889 as the brainchild of two parliamentarians – the British MP William Randal Cremer and French deputy Frédéric Passy – who believed in the role that parliamentarians could play in promoting democracy and peace through dialogue. In a world still dominated by conflict this innovative vision, advocating arbitration, mediation and peaceful resolution of disputes between nations, sowed the seeds of future multilateral institutions like the League of Nations and the United Nations whose primary objective was to thwart any recourse to war.

The values of democracy, respect for the freedom of people and international arbitration gained traction in the second half of the twentieth century, in the aftermath of the Second World War and as an extension of the emancipation movement that saw sovereign States rise from the rubble of the old colonial and ideological empires. Defending those values is more necessary than ever today, as some nations prefer to exercise a form of authoritarianism in their internal affairs and unilateralism in their diplomatic relations, at the risk of compromising human rights and threatening world peace.

© l'Assemblée nationale



Just as it did recently in a joint statement issued at a meeting held with the British Group of the IPU in Paris, the city where the Organization was founded 130 years ago, the French Group hereby reaffirms its faith in and commitment to two fundamental values:

- representative democracy, which can take various forms depending on national cultures and traditions, but which is based on a few fundamental principles: free, fair and regular elections; freedom of thought and expression, especially through independent press and media; free exercise by parliamentarians of their mandate safe from pressure or persecution; the existence of checks and balances guaranteed by the rule of law; and the security, dignity and human rights of all citizens and non-citizens, regardless of race, religion, beliefs, gender or sexual orientation; and
- the promotion of peace through negotiation and dialogue and by countering terrorism and violent extremism, and faith in inter-parliamentary diplomacy to maintain contacts and channels of negotiation to work towards mutual understanding.

Each Member of the IPU respects the political model and social development that are chosen, freely and in an informed way, by their respective populations. By joining the IPU, however, parliaments have agreed to uphold without reservation, according to their own procedures, the universal values of peace and respect for human life as described above.

Today, the French Group urges the IPU to add to its long-standing endeavours:

- equality between women and men, by pursuing and stepping up its work to achieve equal representation of women in parliaments, particularly in positions of authority, and to defend women's rights in all aspects of their social and personal lives; and
- the battle against climate change and the promotion of sustainable development, as the third dimension of the vital work to improve the well-being of all people and bring about a better future for all humankind.

The IPU – the most enduring of international parliamentary organizations – will thus continue to assert itself as the world organization of parliaments, at the forefront of the struggles of our time.



Contribution from the Gambia

We would like to commend the IPU for the continued support, cooperation and enlightenment of all its Members on governance, parliamentary dialogue, democracy and rule of law. Despite the relatively short period of our membership into the Organization, the relationship of the Gambia National Assembly and the IPU is one of cooperation, enlightenment and opportunity for our parliament and parliamentarians given the international best practices we have been able to learn through the partnership.

The IPU is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To this end, it fosters contacts, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries.

We are determined as the Parliament of The Republic of the Gambia to harness our collective resolve to promote women and youth participation in parliament, defend the human rights of all and ensure representative democracy.

It considers questions of international interest and concern and expresses its views on such issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians. It contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights, and to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and the strengthening and development of their means of action.

We are determined as the Parliament of The Republic of the Gambia to harness our collective resolve to promote women and youth participation in parliament, defend the human rights of all and ensure representative democracy.

Aside from these successes, we as the Parliament of the Republic of the Gambia feel that the IPU needs to further commit itself to the following issues in its drive towards providing a holistic parliamentary service:

- Substantive legislative instruments that will legally bind all Members to increase women representation in their respective parliaments.
- An enduring and sustainable mechanism for defending the human rights of parliamentarians and to help them to hold the rights of all.
- Commitment of financial resources to build the capacity of young parliaments in Sub-Saharan Africa within the IPU framework in order to make them more effective, responsive and representative.

The IPU and its Members must commit themselves to work for peace and security, cooperation among nations and universal respect for justice, human rights and fundamental freedom pursuant to the goals and principles proclaimed in the UNESCO Constitution. The IPU should also expand its reach to include the business community, civil society and academia, so that together we can analyse problems, define strategies, design policies and then implement those plans for the benefit of humanity.



© National Assembly of The Gambia

Contribution from Georgia

The Parliament of Georgia would like to congratulate all Member Parliaments on the 130th anniversary of the IPU. The IPU is truly a great platform for global parliamentary diplomacy, dialogue and networking. It provides excellent opportunities for parliamentarians to reach out to their colleagues throughout the world and strengthen bilateral as well as multilateral ties. Further development of regional cooperation formats in the frameworks of the IPU is of the utmost importance in order to share good parliamentary practices and experience at a region-to-region level.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains one of the biggest global challenges in the coming years. As an observer at the United Nations, the IPU has made a great contribution to this process and it should continue raising awareness by equipping parliaments with relevant tools to set and achieve objectives.

Strong and effective parliament ensures the chain of accountability from the voters to the ultimate policy makers, and rapid delivery of benefits to the people.

Increasing the openness and accountability of parliaments, and improving administration using innovative technologies, provides long-term stability, legitimacy, and effectiveness to a legislative body. Therefore, we believe that the role of the IPU is instrumental in building stronger parliaments which are more transparent, more accountable and more responsive to citizens. In this context, the Parliament of Georgia is one of the most active members of the Open Governance Partnership initiative and has implemented a number of significant reforms since the accession to the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness in 2015.

Another important activity of the IPU is to encourage national parliaments to ensure equal representation of women and youth in politics. The IPU should remain committed to fostering equitable gender and youth participation in the decision-making process on national and global levels. The Parliament of Georgia should have hosted the seventh Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in spring 2020, which is yet another effective platform for sharing experience among different parliaments on youth engagement and other relevant issues.

Marking the 130th anniversary, we wish the IPU to promote the voice of parliamentarians in the decision-making process for global politics; strong and effective parliament ensures the chain of accountability from the voters to the ultimate policy makers, and rapid delivery of benefits to the people.



Contribution from Germany

It has been 130 years since the IPU decided to dedicate itself to democracy, human rights and peace, and it is an idea that is more relevant and urgent than ever before. The IPU is not only an organization with an impressive history when it comes to its commitment to democracy, parliamentarianism and human rights; its present and future are also characterised by important tasks. This is illustrated by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, which advocates for members of parliament who are criminalized, persecuted or prevented from carrying out their work. The Committee lends its support to parliamentarians who have been unjustly imprisoned, in order to secure their release. Its achievements cannot be valued highly enough, and even after over 40 years, its work remains vital.

Every parliament can do something – and the IPU is the forum that facilitates a discussion of what can be done and how it can be achieved.

The German Bundestag's "Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians" programme is closely linked with this idea of solidarity. The programme was initiated in 2003 following a cross-party initiative, and organizes "sponsors" for politicians who are being persecuted or threatened. The initiative is informed about cases of persecuted parliamentarians and human rights activists, both through the IPU, and also by private citizens or civil society organizations, for example.

The programme falls under the remit of the Bundestag's Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, which connects Members with parliamentarians in need of a sponsor, or provides them with information on whether politicians are persecuted or threatened in a particular country, for instance in the run-up to a trip abroad, enabling them to advocate for their colleagues in person. Trips such as these provide an opportunity for informal talks and to listen to concerns. This makes it clear to those who violate human rights that we are keeping a very close eye on developments, and that the fate of the individuals affected will not remain in the dark. In this way, the Members of the Bundestag make an important contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights. This is, after all, one of the most important tasks for parliamentarians: protecting those who courageously stand up for their own and others' human rights, and who themselves are at risk.



© Julia Kummerow

The German Bundestag's initiative has been able to provide hope and assistance to many people. The IPU Delegation at the Bundestag takes these achievements, together with the 130th anniversary of the IPU, as an opportunity to appeal to all IPU Members to establish a similar mechanism within their own parliament to systematically document human rights violations and take action against them. Every parliament can do something – and the IPU is the forum that facilitates a discussion of what can be done and how it can be achieved.

In this spirit, we extend our compliments to the IPU for its work over the past 130 years and wish it all the very best for a future filled, above all else, with the same courage and determination.



© Marc-Steffen Unger

Contribution from **Germany**

Contribution from Guinea-Bissau

A space for consultation and harmonizing principles, rules and positions among the parliaments of the world, the IPU represents for Guinea-Bissau a world-renowned forum focused on achieving the best performance in the functioning of the representative bodies of the people, and an important vehicle for communicating the will of citizens.

Monitoring the important global issues that give rise to concern in international politics, ranging from the struggle for gender equality to economic matters, as well as focusing on defending and promoting human rights, the IPU encompasses – in the National Assembly’s view – the scope of activities that the highest representative entities of peoples around the world should pursue.

The IPU encompasses – in the National Assembly’s view – the scope of activities that the highest representative entities of peoples around the world should pursue.

The emergence of globalization as the natural space for connection recognized by different civilizations calls for a harmonized mechanism of interaction between peoples and communities. It also strengthens the need to raise the awareness of politicians worldwide of the importance of adopting public measures based on internationally accepted standards, for the benefit of all.

The solidarity between IPU Members extols the protective dimension of the IPU’s universal principles and values in the international arena and within Member States. Focused on the defence and protection of people’s rights worldwide, the IPU is held in high esteem in Guinea-Bissau, despite the

overall weak dissemination of its activities within populations. One of the current challenges facing the IPU is to make itself better known to the populations of its Members.

The exchange of experiences between Members should be strengthened and expanded to allow for more coming together and greater knowledge-sharing on converging realities, and to facilitate joint decision-making.

As an institution within a country moving towards the consolidation of democracy and the establishment of human rights institutions, the Parliament of Guinea-Bissau is faced with the challenge of making the best solutions available to the country. It counts, when confronted with results that do not always represent the most democratic solutions, on the strong and close cooperation of the IPU in terms of capacity-building and improving parliamentarians' working conditions.

We wish the IPU, our Organization, and all the Member Parliaments, improved results and greater understanding of the crucial issues facing our planet. To the President of the Organization and the Secretary General, we wish you great success in the exercise of your activities.

© J cornelius / CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)





© Parliament of Guyana

Contribution from Guyana

The National Assembly of the Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, by way of Resolution No. 26, became a Member of the IPU in 2016.

It is our understanding that the IPU envisions a world where every voice counts and where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development. As a global organization of national parliaments, the IPU works towards improving and enhancing peace, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.

In light of the above, the Parliament of Guyana is committed to the work of the IPU and will continue to participate in the various forums that aid in the mandate of the IPU.

The following are some of the benefits the Parliament of Guyana enjoys from being a member of the IPU:

- Assistance in the promotion, protection and strengthening of democracy.
- Access to a database containing useful information, studies and research on the parliaments that are Members of the IPU.
- Provision of opportunities to bring parliamentary voices to global affairs.
- Capacity building and technical assistance for parliaments and parliamentarians.
- Sensitivity to the global development agenda.
- Opportunities for inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation.

The Parliament of Guyana is proud of its parliamentary committee system. Stemming from the functions of Parliament, there are four Sectoral Committees which give oversight to four important sectors in Guyana's economy. Those committees are:

- The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Natural Resources
- The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services
- The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services
- The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Foreign Relations

The Parliament of Guyana is committed to the work of the IPU and will continue to participate in the various forums that aid in the mandate of the IPU.

Meetings of Sectoral Committees are not held in-camera, unless the Committee so decides. Instead, these committees are open to the public. Members of the media attend and disseminate information. The Sectoral Committees have the power to summon witnesses to give evidence on any matter under consideration. Additionally, those committees may also invite submissions from the general public on matters to be considered. The work of Sectoral Committees promotes transparency and accountability and creates an avenue for the voice of the general public to be heard.

The Sectoral Committees examine all executive policies, programmes, performance and administration for each sector to determine whether the execution of government policies is in consonance with the principles of good governance and in the best interest of the people. The Government and the Opposition have the entitlement to elect one alternate Member each for each Sectoral Committee.

Sectoral Committees have the authority to:

- (a) determine areas of government activity for scrutiny or specific examination;
- (b) request the Minister assigned responsibilities for the sector to submit written or oral information, including government documents and records about any specific area of government policy and administration;
- (c) review existing legislation on government policy administration for any of the sector;
- (d) summon persons to give evidence in accordance with the Legislative Bodies (Evidence) Act, Chapter 1:08 of the Laws of Guyana;
- (e) scrutinize Government documents, papers and records;
- (f) visit any government activity or project in Guyana as agreed and arranged by the Sectoral Committee;
- (g) in the discharge of their mandate, utilize the services of experts, specialists and other sources of advice as the Committees may determine;
- (h) establish a timetable for the conduct of their work;
- (i) make recommendations to the Assembly on legislation or any other action to be taken on matters falling within their purview; and
- (j) submit periodic reports to the National Assembly on their work.

The Assembly may request a Sectoral Committee to enquire into and report on any aspect of the policy or administration of the Government within its terms of reference.

Contribution from Hungary

Hungary has been a parliamentary democracy since the demise of the communist system. The state is organized according to the stipulations of the Fundamental Law (Constitution), which entered into force in 2011. The Head of State of Hungary, expressing the unity of the nation, is the President of the Republic. Legislative powers are exercised by the unicameral National Assembly. The government reporting to the Parliament is the main organ of the executive branch, whereas the judiciary is composed of the independent courts and the Constitutional Court.

The 199 Members of Parliament are elected every four years through a combined party list and individual constituency electoral system. Hungarian citizens living abroad also have the right to cast their votes in parliamentary elections. The parliamentary representation of national minorities living in Hungary is ensured by their right to contest the elections and obtain a preferential mandate, or in the absence of this to delegate a nationality representative.

The Hungarian legislature was the first in the world to commemorate the round anniversary of the creation of the IPU and to launch a series of events on the 130th anniversary of the international Organization.

As one of the nine founding members of the IPU, Hungary has been an active participant in international parliamentary diplomacy and cooperation from the outset, driven by the conviction that continuous dialogue between legislators of the world is indispensable in overcoming global problems.

Hungarian MPs have played an active role in the creation and the successful functioning of the IPU from the beginning. So far, eight Hungarian members have been elected to the Executive Committee and in 2019–2020 Hungary was the chair of the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law. Since the foundation of the IPU in 1889, the National Assembly of Hungary has hosted the General Assembly on three occasions: the 7th IPU conference marking the end of the 1896 millennial celebrations of the Hungarians conquering the Carpathian-basin; the 32nd IPU conference of 1936 and the 81st IPU conference marking the 100th anniversary of the Organization in March 1989.

In addition, Budapest has hosted many IPU policy events: on security issues in 1983; on children's rights in 1993; a preparatory meeting for the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in 2004; a meeting on information and communication technologies in 2009 and, in 2017, on the SDGs, specifically climate change and the crucial role of water. The IPU publication "Parliamentary action plan on climate change" was published in Hungarian for this seminar, while the 136th IPU General Assembly in Dhaka hosted a Hungarian poster exhibition: "Youth for sustainable development".

The Hungarian legislature was the first in the world to commemorate the round anniversary of the creation of the IPU and to launch a series of events on the 130th anniversary of the international Organization. The Hungarian Post issued a commemorative set of stamps depicting the National Assembly building and the IPU headquarters in Geneva during the visit of the IPU President and the Secretary General to Budapest in June 2019. The commemorative photo exhibition was also presented at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The international community can only manage global challenges through joint and concerted action. The IPU continuously keeps the eradication of poverty, nuclear disarmament, the migration crisis, and the fight against climate change, extremism and terrorism on its agenda, with a view to focusing the attention of the world's legislators to the significance of these often sensitive issues.

The IPU develops proposals for solutions while respecting the political sovereignty of nation states and individual national considerations. Hungary stands by the core values – democracy, parliamentary institutions, peace and security, and strengthening international cooperation – of the IPU. Driven by the desire to leave behind a better world for future generations, we especially support the comprehensive implementation of the SDGs, as well as firm and efficient action against climate change. National parliaments in their capacities as the highest elected representative bodies and in their consideration of the interests of the entire population, including the most vulnerable and needy citizens, have to serve the cause of building a sustainable and liveable world. The IPU provides for the world's legislators the necessary forum of dialogue and exchange; the guarantee of a better future.

© Bençe-Kovács György felvétele



Contribution from Iceland

The Parliament of Iceland – Alþingi – was established in 930 AD which makes it the oldest running parliament in the world. It has been an active member of the IPU since 1951 and appoints a permanent delegation of three MPs after every election.

Iceland is a small, stable, democratic country in which respect for human rights, rule of law and democratic values is implemented through good governance. It has a series of institutions dedicated to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Centre for Gender Equality and the Data Protection Authority.

Iceland has been a committed member of the United Nations since 1946. It currently holds a seat in the United Nations Human Rights Council which mirrors its strong emphasis on human rights in its foreign policy. With emphasis on freedom and democracy as fundamental values and increased respect for human rights and equal participation of every individual in our society we have underpinned prosperity and well-being.

It is our belief that the IPU has an important role as a channel for a dialogue between the representatives of the people, regardless of the relationship between states and governments.

Members of parliament are important actors when it comes to challenges of great importance such as gender equality, climate change, human rights and peace and security. Furthermore, we need to acknowledge that some of these challenges transcend national borders, making international cooperation vital and the role of international organizations like the IPU of utmost importance.

The Icelandic delegation to the IPU wants to stress the importance of promoting gender equality as a main concern of the IPU. This is based on the conviction that gender equality is a fundamental human right. Also, evidence shows that in societies where the fight for gender equality has been most successful, the social, economic and democratic rights of the public are greater.

Iceland is a gender equality frontrunner and has topped the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index 10 years in a row - making it the country with the narrowest gender gap in the world.

Moreover, it is important to have a continuing dialogue within the IPU on the challenges posed by the world's greatest threat: climate change. This dialogue should be on the role that parliamentarians can play to address the issue, how to respond to it, reduce the risks of natural disaster and fulfil relevant international commitments.

Iceland is strongly committed to the Paris Climate Agreement implementation and has clear determination to succeed in its goals on this most important issue. It holds the Arctic

Council Chairmanship for 2019–2021 which reflects Iceland's commitment to the principle of sustainable development and refers to the necessity of close cooperation between the states and people of the region and beyond.

The Icelandic delegation wants to see the IPU remain vibrant and at the centre when it comes to defending the rule of law and core values of democracy at global level. The IPU's strong focus on parliamentarians' human rights has been valuable and successful through the work of The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

With inter-parliamentary dialogue we have a platform for addressing pressing issues, like the influence of social media on democracy, fake news and propaganda, as well as how we can mend the growing mistrust towards politicians.

As the elected representatives of our nations it is our duty to pay attention to new challenges of central importance. Furthermore MPs are increasingly facing complicated challenges from organized interest groups and lobbyists that need to be addressed.

It is our belief that the IPU has an important role as a channel for a dialogue between the representatives of the people, regardless of the relationship between states and governments. It works closely with the United Nations, with which it has permanent observer status, and represents broad opinions of its extensive member states. In the coming years the IPU has the responsibility of ensuring that all groups are represented at their meetings with focus on increasing participation of women and young people.

For 130 years, the IPU has taken positive steps towards building global democracy through political dialogue and action. To be able to establish a baseline of trust and respect amongst each other we have to build strong international relations with equality, democracy and peace as a guiding light. On that path, the IPU has an important role to play.



Contribution from India

It is heartening to note that the organization established in 1889 by two great visionaries, William Randal Cremer of the United Kingdom and Frédéric Passy of France, has grown in stature over the years to be a vibrant and influential force with 179 Member Parliaments and 13 Associate Members. This year is an occasion to celebrate its endeavours, initiatives and accomplishments in fostering a spirit of brotherhood and bonhomie among parliamentarians across the world. What the United Nations is to governments, so is the IPU to parliaments. India is proud to have been a part of the historic journey of the IPU.

India's contribution in the field of Health and WTO matters has given us the opportunity to serve on the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO since 2003 and on the IPU Advisory Group on Health since 2006.

The Indian Parliamentary Group (IPG) which functions as the National Group of the IPU, has since its inception contributed immensely to promote the aims and objectives of the IPU in India. India's commitment towards the IPU is evident from the fact that India has been an active and regular participant in the biannual Assemblies held by the IPU and other events organized at the regional level. Besides hosting two IPU Assemblies in the years 1969 and 1993 and Specialized Conferences in 1997, 2011 and 2012 in New Delhi which witnessed a large number of participants and fruitful deliberations on the core issues, we have organized seminars and workshops for the benefit of parliamentarians. For

example, the South Asian Speaker's Summit on Achieving the SDGs, which was organized jointly by the IPU and Parliament of India in 2017, identified many core areas of cooperation.

India has held the post of IPU Presidency: twice by late Shri Gurdial Singh Dhillon, the then Speaker; Lok Sabha from 1973 to 1976, and by Dr. Najma Heptulla. It was during the term of Dr. Najma Heptulla that the IPU convened its first ever Conference of the Presiding Officers of National Parliaments at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and since then this event has been institutionalized by the IPU.

India's contribution in the field of Health and WTO matters has given us the opportunity to serve on the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO since 2003 and on the IPU Advisory Group on Health since 2006, which has provided us a platform to learn and share our experiences.



Realizing the importance of women and youth in the decision processes and to increase their political participation, India has implemented policies and programmes to achieve this end. The core mission of the IPU is to strengthen democratic institutions, practices and procedures in parliaments across the world and to undertake capacity building of Member Parliaments in order to enable them to deliver good governance which is the cornerstone of a democratic political structure.

The Parliament of India, through the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE) erstwhile Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training (BPST), has been imparting training in Parliamentary Procedure and Practice to various countries around the world since 1976. India intends to work with the IPU in the promotion of capacity building initiatives amongst parliaments through an Indian endeavour, the “Speaker’s Research Initiative”, a knowledge-sharing platform for disseminating critical information and expertise to law makers and also providing fellowships to young and senior scholars.

While strongly reaffirming its commitment towards the objectives of the IPU, India hopes that this Organization in coming years will also reinforce its commitment towards the resolution of global issues affecting mankind.



© Parliament of India

Contribution from Indonesia

Parliaments as institutions, as well as individual parliamentarians, play a valuable and complementary role in influencing international policy and foreign relations. For 130 years the IPU has been the most prominent inter-parliamentary institution facilitating parliamentary diplomacy. The IPU has empowered parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development around the world.

The rapid growth of inter-parliamentary engagement has further strengthened the role of national parliament beyond the domestic law-making, budgeting and oversight.

Within the past decades, we have witnessed the transformation of the world political situation. The rapid growth of inter-parliamentary engagement has further strengthened the role of national parliament beyond the domestic law-making, budgeting and oversight.

Over the years, the Indonesian House has been very active in the IPU. Several emergency items on issues of common concerns ranging from the humanitarian situation in Myanmar and the human rights crisis in Palestine to global security threats such as terrorism have been forwarded and supported by IPU Members. Our MPs have been keen to represent the Asia Pacific geopolitical group in holding several strategic posts within the structure of the IPU. We have had representatives in the Executive Committee, the Committee on Middle East Questions, the Committee on United Nations Affairs, and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, as well as the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians for two consecutive terms and the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law for more than one appointment.

In October 2019, a new Indonesian Parliament was inaugurated as the result of the April 2019 elections. We see this as a momentum to renew our engagement with the IPU. Moving forward, the Indonesian House will continue to be part of the IPU and contribute to its work. As the IPU celebrates its 130th anniversary, there are two key points that we would like to highlight. First, the IPU could strengthen its role in promoting democracy worldwide. We believe the IPU is in a strategic position to guide parliaments through today's many challenges to democracy including making democracy more inclusive. Second, the IPU could enhance cooperation with the United Nations and other multilateral bodies with a view to instilling parliamentary perspectives to international cooperation and global governance.



Contribution from Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran has constantly been an active and willing member of the IPU. Iran joined the IPU in 1930 during its eighth term of the National Consultative Assembly.

The Iranian Parliament hosted the 55th IPU Assembly and related meetings in its capital, Tehran, in 1966.

After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, a new round of activities of the IPU Group in Iran's Islamic Parliament (IIP) was resumed. The statute and rules of procedure for the IIP-IPU Group were adopted on 7 August 1983. Subject to Article 7 of the statute, 15 interested parliamentarians are openly elected for a two-year membership to the IIP-IPU Group. The duties of these elected lawmakers are to set the policies of the IPU Group and to designate their fellow parliamentarians to take part in the IPU Assembly. The IIP-IPU Group consists of 15 people,

The IIP is active not only in the biannual assemblies, but also in other side events relevant to young parliamentarians, climate change, the status of women, SDGs and the World Trade Organization.

including one chairperson, two vice-chairmen, one secretary-general, one treasurer and two secretaries, and five alternate members. Their duties are carried out either by plenary or via subcommittees.

After deciding over the composition of the IIP-IPU Group, the newly-elected members are authorized to reach a two-year consensus about the composition of the delegation to the upcoming meetings.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has nine votes in the IPU governing councils and some Iranian MPs have direct assistance to decision-making procedures in the IPU.

From 2008, during his chairmanship of the IIP, Speaker Mr. Ali Larijani, the President of the Parliament, has always taken part in the world conferences of Speakers of Parliament and most of the biannual assemblies and has given the supreme goals of the IPU his full endorsement. He has also encouraged further contribution of fellow parliamentarians to the IPU; for example, the number of female MPs in the IIP-IPU Group has increased from one to four lawmakers in recent years.

Mr. Kazem Jalali has been a member of the IPU Executive Committee from the Asia Pacific Geopolitical Group and a member of the IPU High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism. Moreover, Ms. Fatemeh Hosseini, the youngest lawmaker in the current term of the IIP leading the IIP-IPU Group, is a member of the IPU's Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and of the IPU's Committee to Promote Respect for International

Humanitarian Law. Mr.Mohammad Javad Jamali Nobandegani holds the position of the Secretary General of the Iranian IPU Group and therefore is managing the Group's secretariat at the Parliament.

The IIP is active not only in the biannual assemblies, but also in other side events relevant to young parliamentarians, climate change, the status of women, SDGs and the World Trade Organization. While taking MPs' expertise and career backgrounds into account, the IIP has set a mechanism which allows the entire parliament to participate in the IPU's specialized meetings and share their viewpoints. After every IPU Assembly, all MPs are provided with the IPU outcomes and resolutions with the purpose of informing them about latest globally-approved rules and decisions.

© Parliament of Iran



Contribution from Israel

We are pleased to contribute to the occasion of the 130th anniversary of the founding of the IPU.

The Knesset, the Israeli parliament, was founded seventy years ago in 1949 and attained membership of the IPU within a year. The alacrity with which the Knesset joined the IPU is a clear testament to the importance that the Knesset has always attached to parliamentary diplomacy, the dialogue between nations and people, and active membership in the international family of parliaments. Throughout the past seven decades, the Knesset has always taken its work with the IPU most seriously, encouraging our parliamentarians to think of new, creative ways to play an active role in the Organization's efforts.

New technologies and initiatives have made the Knesset's work more transparent and open to every member of the public. It is the house of the people and the heart of Israel's democracy.

In November 2018, the Knesset held its first conference with the IPU to promote the SDGs. This was a significant milestone in our collaboration with the IPU, and dozens of parliamentarians came to learn from Israel's experience in various areas of innovation such as hi-tech, water management, social integration, and inclusiveness-through both cutting-edge ideas that the Knesset has developed and legislation that benefits Israeli society as a whole.

Though the Knesset is a young parliament, it is always forward-looking. Indeed, recent years have seen improvements in its best practices in various fields. The Green Knesset initiative has made the Israeli Parliament a model of sustainability for the Israeli public and for other legislatures around the world. Accessibility at the Knesset Building has been revolutionized, and the Knesset has become a leader in Israel in employing people with disabilities. New technologies and initiatives have made the Knesset's work more transparent and open to every member of the public. It is the house of the people and the heart of Israel's democracy.

Many of these best practices are derived from the expertise and experience that has been gained from colleagues around the world. We believe that in the coming years the IPU will continue to foster even more joint endeavours and increased exchanges of knowledge and ideas. Let us seize these opportunities and use them to nourish progress and nurture prosperity in each other's countries. We cannot afford to pass up these chances to cultivate friendships between people, especially in the Middle East. We call on all nations, and especially on Israel's neighbours to realize the full potential of this forum and use it to bring a better future for all our people.

As parliamentarians, what unites us and motivates our work is the dedication to building that future; the world in which our children and grandchildren will grow up. We must combat global warming, we must promote the SDGs, and we must strive to attain justice, equality, and progress. We must treat each other with honour and dignity, regardless of race, religion, or nationality. These vital tasks are not simple and they transcend national boundaries, so that the IPU's mission will only grow more critical and more relevant with time.

We wish all Members a fruitful and enriching continuation of our collaborations and much success in achieving our common goals.

© Knesset Press Office / Isaac Harari



Contribution from Japan

Since its foundation in 1889, the IPU has worked tirelessly to promote world peace and parliamentary democracy by fostering dialogue between the members of both national and regional parliaments as well as by cooperating with the United Nations and other international organizations. The National Diet of Japan identifies with the ideals of the IPU and is committed to the development of the IPU.

The Japanese Parliament first joined the IPU in 1908. Although the IPU Assemblies were interrupted by the Second World War, the IPU resumed in 1947 after the war. The National Diet of Japan returned to the IPU in 1952. Since that time, the National Diet of Japan has continuously sent delegations comprising members of both Houses to attend IPU Assemblies and contributed to its success by actively participating in discussions and submitting draft resolutions.

The National Diet of Japan has twice hosted the IPU Assembly in Tokyo: the 49th Assembly in 1960 and 61st Assembly in 1974. It has proactively contributed to international cooperation regionally by hosting the Asia and Pacific Inter-Parliamentary Conference on “Science and Technology for Regional Sustainable Development” in 1994 and the IPU ASEAN +3 Group Meeting in 2005. In 2015, the National Diet of Japan hosted the IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo and provided a platform for dialogue between young parliamentarians.

In addition to being one of the largest financial contributors, the National Diet of Japan also contributes significantly in terms of human resources, and many of its members have served in important posts.

The National Diet of Japan makes good use of IPU programmes to conduct bilateral activities. In 2006, as a part of the IPU Technical Cooperation Programme to assist the democratization of newly established parliaments, a delegation led by the Deputy President of the Upper House of the Afghan Parliament was invited to Japan by the House of Councillors for a study visit on the structure, function, and legislative processes of the National Diet of Japan. In 2018, the Legislative Bureau of Japan’s House of Representatives began a series of programmes under an IPU Legislative and Drafting Support Project for the Secretariat of the Upper House of Pakistan.

In addition to being one of the largest financial contributors, the National Diet of Japan also contributes significantly in terms of human resources, and many of its members have served in important posts. These include the IPU Executive Committee, on which members of the House of Representatives Messrs. Kenji Fukunaga, Jushiro Komiyama, Wataru Hiraizumi, Tsutomu Kawara, Mitsuhiro Uesugi, and Shunichi Suzuki have served; the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, on which members of the House of Representatives Ms. Yoko Kamikawa and Ms.



© National Diet of Japan

Chinami Nishimura have served as vice-president and member, respectively; and the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS, on which member of the House of Councillors Mr. Ryuhei Kawada has served.

Since its founding, the IPU has been an international organization for the parliaments of sovereign nations worldwide that endeavours to promote the establishment of systems of parliamentary democracy. Democracy is a universal value that is an essential element of good governance, and the importance of respecting representative democracy and promoting its development cannot be overemphasized.

It is reassuring to see that IPU Member Parliaments are committed to communicating and working together in keeping with IPU missions through opportunities offered by the IPU. In a rapidly changing international community, we expect that the IPU will play an increasingly important role as an advocate for democracy.

With the rapid advance of globalization, finding solutions to intertwined international issues such as security, anti-terrorism, economic development, climate change, environment and energy issues and attaining sustainable development goals requires that all countries share good practices and pursue policy coordination multilaterally, since discussion or initiatives in one country alone are not sufficient.

The need is apparent not just for the administrative branches of national governments but also for the legislative branches to pursue multilateral cooperation, and the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and other forms of cooperation between elected representatives is increasing.

The IPU began in 1889 with just nine countries but has since grown to 179 Members. The continued focus of the IPU on promoting universal membership shows that discussion and cooperation that reflect the will of all the peoples of the world are needed for resolving the above-mentioned international issues.

Just as it has for the past 130 years, the IPU is expected to continue to function as a platform for political dialogue between parliamentarians worldwide and to contribute to the establishment of world peace through a parliamentary network.



Contribution from Jordan

The IPU continues to explore and strengthen relationships between parliament and democracy, and to share how parliaments are putting the key values of democracy into practice.

The IPU promotes democracy in a variety of ways, ranging from its political pronouncements, most notably the Universal Declaration on Democracy, to its programmes to strengthen parliamentary institutions. In addition, it is resolved to protect and promote human rights, political dialogue, good governance and gender equality. Underpinning the work of the IPU is the simple idea that a strong parliament is a vital sign of a healthy democracy.

On the framework for a democratic parliament, the Jordanian Parliament is an elected parliament socially and politically representative of the diversity of the people, and ensures equal opportunities and protections for all its members. It is open to the nation through

Underpinning the work of the IPU is the simple idea that a strong parliament is a vital sign of a healthy democracy.

different media, and transparent in the conduct of its work, involving the public, including the associations and movements of civil society. Members of Parliament are accountable to the electorate for their performance in office and integrity of conduct; the effective organization of works in accordance with these democratic values, and the performance of Parliament's legislative and oversight functions ensures that the Parliament operates in a manner that serves the needs of the whole population.

The priorities of the Jordanian Parliament are based on promoting the implementation of the SDGs, maintaining good parliamentary governance and the relationship with the executive and judicial authorities and with civil society, ensuring the separation of powers, increasing the capacity of parliamentarians and staff on parliamentary functions of representation, and focusing on lawmaking and oversight.

In addition, gender equality and enhancing the role and involvement of women in the political process are important to the Jordanian Parliament.



Contribution from Kazakhstan

Currently, parliamentarism is the most prevalent democratic institution, recognized across countries with different political and cultural traditions. The growing importance of parliamentary diplomacy, which has become a crucial factor in interstate relations and global development, is greatly contributed to by the IPU. For 130 years, the IPU has been one of the most important international platforms for discussing pressing issues related to the promotion of equality, sustainable development, the rule of law, peace and security.

Kazakhstan's society is a unique example of inter-ethnic and inter-religious pluralism and tolerance. Peace and tranquility, civil consent, religious tolerance, equal participation of representatives of various cultures in society.

An organization that unities almost all the national parliaments of the world, the IPU also promotes the principles of transparency, gender balance, accessibility and effectiveness. Additionally, the IPU has become an essential link for establishing personal contacts between parliamentarians in order to strengthen cooperation between countries. The participation of the IPU and its Members in the discussion and implementation of topical issues raised within the United Nations contributes significantly to the achievement of the SDGs, tackling global challenges and building comprehensive partnerships.

For the Parliament of Kazakhstan, participation in the work of the IPU is one of the important areas of inter-parliamentary activity. During our years of cooperation, the major international initiatives of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, have been in the areas of non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, confidence-building and inter-religious dialogue. The Head of State, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in the spirit of continuity, is maintaining the promotion of Kazakhstani initiatives in the international arena.

Kazakhstan's society is a unique example of inter-ethnic and inter-religious pluralism and tolerance. Peace and tranquility, civil consent, religious tolerance, equal participation of representatives of various cultures in society: these principles formed the basis of our national policy over the years of independence and provided a hallmark of Kazakhstan in the world community.

For Kazakhstan, located at the junction of Europe and Asia, the development of regional cooperation is particularly important. With a view to strengthening the inter-parliamentary interaction between the countries of the continent, in September 2019 in Nur-Sultan, the Mazhilis of the Parliament of Kazakhstan held the Fourth Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments titled "Greater Eurasia: Dialogue. Trust. Partnership." Parliamentarians from 65 countries and 14 international and inter-parliamentary organizations attended the event.



© IC UMTO RK

The main objective of the meeting was to establish direct multilateral dialogue between the heads of legislative bodies of the Eurasian countries in order to strengthen relationships based on trust, further enhance interaction as an effective mechanism of inter-parliamentary cooperation and consolidate its long-term development.

Active involvement of the parliamentarians in discussing the issues of international trade and transparency of the World Trade Organization also contributes to achieving a fair international trading environment.

The Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization not only establishes contacts with colleagues from parliaments of other countries specializing in economic and trade issues but also demonstrates the important role of parliamentarians' further participation in discussing trade issues.

We believe that the IPU will continue to facilitate the participation of parliamentarians in the discussion of these issues and the exchange of legislative experience. Moreover, the joint work of parliamentarians, including the work within the framework of the IPU, will further strengthen cooperation and interaction in the context of international relations.

Undoubtedly, this will contribute to the development of parliamentary diplomacy and emphasize the important role of parliaments in protecting human rights, ensuring security and sustainable development in all spheres of society.

We are certain that the areas of cooperation between the Parliament of Kazakhstan and the IPU will expand, and joint work will be fruitful and effective.

© IC UMTO RK



Contribution from **Kazakhstan**



Contribution from Kenya

The Parliament of Kenya is responsive in addressing societal needs through the formulation of legislation and policy; it has integrity and accountability in the use of public funds and oversight of both the national and devolved governments.

The Parliament of Kenya is also defined by its inclusiveness, cooperation and consultation with international organizations such as the IPU and the competence and professionalism of its secretariat.

We look forward to a strong partnership between the Parliament of Kenya and the IPU in sharing knowledge and offering expertise through the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training as well as the East Africa Hub of the Centre for Innovation in Parliament hosted in Kenya. Partnerships may also extend to specific programmes targeting the Parliament of Kenya with the view to building the capacity of our parliamentarians and secretariat aimed at entrenching the tenets of parliamentary democracy and governance.

We would like to see membership of the IPU rise to the same number as the United Nations in order to ensure more inclusivity.

The Parliament of Kenya has endeavoured to set best practice in a number of ways:

Pre-publication scrutiny has been used effectively by our parliament to seek the views of the sponsor of a Bill, the relevant Cabinet Secretary or any other person on the likely impact, effect, outcome and consequence of a legislative proposal and any other aspect a Member of Parliament or the Committee may deem necessary to ensure Bills published for processing into law will improve the lives of the people.

The Parliament of Kenya has fully implemented Article 118 of the Constitution of Kenya that requires Parliament to conduct its business in an open manner, and its sittings and those of its committees to be open to the public; and facilitate public participation and involvement in the legislative and other business of Parliament and its committees.

Our Parliament provides for a public hearing platform for members of the public and stakeholders to submit their views on Bills read for the first time in the House. The views are compiled into a report that is tabled in the House to inform debate on the Bill during Second Reading stage with the view to incorporating some of the recommendations during the Committee of the Whole Stage on Bills before they are passed by the House and subsequently assented into law.

Our parliament is accountable to the public through deadlines of service delivery captured in the

Standing orders and practices; for instance petitions have to be concluded and reports tabled within 60 calendar days, public hearings on a Bill read a first time should commence immediately a Bill is read a first time and referred to a Committee and be concluded within 30 days.

The public has been given full access to our parliament to forward matters for consideration by Members of Parliament. Further, the website of the Parliament of Kenya is interactive, and members of the public can use the platform to reach parliament and make their voice heard.

Every year, the parliament of Kenya organizes Parliament Week. During this week, members of the public are allowed into the precincts of parliament for a tour of parliament and interaction with Members of Parliament and the secretariat. This forum serves as a platform for creating awareness on the mandate of parliament among members of the public.

The Senate has started holding its sittings in the counties for a week once a year in a bid to interact with the devolved governments and their people. The initiative "*Senate mashinani*" is in its third year in 2020.

We would like to see membership of the IPU rise to the same number as the United Nations in order to ensure more inclusivity. Further, the IPU should foster its core mandate of entrenching democracy and assisting parliaments and parliamentarians throughout the world to fulfil their mandates especially in young democracies or in countries where gains in democracy are under threat. We believe that technology can play a key role in engaging parliamentarians around the world in the future.



Contribution from Kuwait

The IPU was established as the first forum for world parliamentarians without discrimination or restrictions. The IPU also became a voice calling for public rights and freedoms, respect for national sovereignty and the protection of millions of displaced people and refugees through concerted legislative efforts to draw up successful policies leading to the enactment of legislations and decisions that guarantee the right of people to live a dignified life where humanity and lives are honoured.

In 1964, the Kuwait National Assembly was honoured to join the ranks of international parliaments that firmly believe in the need to create a better tomorrow based on international security and peace.

In 1964, the Kuwait National Assembly was honoured to join the ranks of international parliaments that firmly believe in the need to create a better tomorrow based on international security and peace. Since we joined this international organization, we have assumed the responsibility to safeguard and protect public rights and freedoms in all global issues. We have also reaffirmed our full commitment to all the issues adopted by the IPU over the past years and translated these commitments into domestic legislation as required by the rules and regulations of the IPU.

We have also witnessed the tremendous development in the size of the parliamentary participations of brotherly and friendly parliaments and their tireless interaction towards the success of the work of the IPU through its successive sessions. The IPU is to be thanked for its dedication in raising diverse issues annually to achieve justice and equality for all segments of society.

We, as one of the members of this international community, look forward to other instruments that may be utilized to increase the effectiveness of the Organization through direct and equal dialogue with governments in order to draw their attention to the issues raised in the IPU meetings. The IPU can also utilize its good offices through presenting the reports and recommendations of the IPU annual conferences or direct negotiations to build bridges of legislative-governmental cooperation to achieve a successful settlement that improves the lives of millions of people around the world.

On this occasion, we congratulate the IPU and ourselves for the continued contribution and support during that past 130 years and wish this international forum greater progress in alleviating the suffering, concerns and issues of the people of the world. We are also aware that continuity will only be achieved through our joint efforts as parliamentarians, and by putting greater efforts to support the resolutions, policies and recommendations urged by the IPU in its meetings.

We must also take advantage of the opportunities available in sharing experiences and expertise that bring closer views and help in formulating proposals and policies to ensure supporting the IPU vision to create a better world governed by international peace and security.

© National Assembly of Kuwait



Contribution from Kuwait

Contribution from Latvia

Our IPU is 130 years old. It is experienced, smart and wise. The IPU's work can be assessed as "satisfactory to good": good parliamentary democracy, good governance, satisfactory empowerment of women, satisfactory youth involvement, and something is also being done to meet the SDGs. Nevertheless, we all wish to make it even better.

The IPU family has a vision of excellence: a democratic, safe, respectful, prospering and clean world, and is aware of the responsibility it has to bring this vision to life. We would like to see the

"Shadow Day has an educational purpose and it is an interesting event that offers young people a great opportunity to see the work of Parliament directly."

Standing Committee Bureaux continue to be strong, hard-working and manage the work of the committees by actively addressing and discussing topics and contributing to the preparation of resolutions.

We would also like a united system where a single topic is debated by different committees; for example, addressing the implementation of one SDG. We'd like lively committee debates, concise Resolution texts, and more speakers sharing their specific experiences.

In recent years, the Saeima (Latvian Parliament) has focused on youth involvement and youth policy issues, realizing that this part of society will bring a new way of thinking to the world and create a secure and friendly society which will be able to reach the SDGs.

The Youth Saeima is a project of the Latvian Parliament which gives young people the opportunity to express and defend their ideas, as well as to get to know the everyday life of MPs. Young people are required to submit an idea and to promote it during the pre-election campaign period.

The 100 young people whose ideas receive the largest number of votes are elected to the Youth Parliament. They meet at the Saeima to understand the specifics of the legislators' work and to address their peers on topical issues in society.

The Youth Parliament functions much like the real Parliament: members are required to draft legislative proposals in committees and then adopt them in plenary sittings. Members also participate in the debates from the rostrum of the Parliament, arguing in support of their ideas. The Youth Parliament adopts drafted declarations on the role of youth in shaping the future of Latvia, the EU, education opportunities and other topics.

The Speaker of the Saeima chairs the Youth Parliament session and the Chairs of the Parliamentary Committees chair the committee meetings. At the end of each Youth Parliament the most active young people are awarded the title of Future Politician.

© Ernests Dinka, Saeima



The Youth Parliament's latest themes have been:

- Youth. Latvia. European Union, 2019
- Building the future Latvia, 2018
- Education - Ideas for Improving Formal and Informal Education, 2017

The Job Shadow Day is another popular initiative in Latvia. Within the framework of career education, the Saeima gives schoolchildren the opportunity to spend one day following MPs at work, to get acquainted with the Parliament and parliamentary procedures.

This year, the Job Shadow Day brought together nearly 200 schoolchildren who attended committee meetings and other events in the Parliament. The Saeima is the most active organisation in Latvia providing job-shadowing opportunities. In 2019, the Saeima took part in the Job Shadow Day for the eleventh consecutive year, and over the years, more than 2,200 schoolchildren have shadowed MPs.

The Job Shadow Day tradition was launched by the Saeima in 2009, when Mr Gundars Daudze, the current Leader of the Latvian Group to the IPU, was the Speaker of the Saeima.

"Shadow Day has an educational purpose and it is an interesting event that offers young people a great opportunity to see the work of Parliament directly. We are pleased with the great activity and willingness of the schoolchildren to get acquainted with the work of MPs. This shows that a strong generation of future politicians is growing in Latvia," he said.



Contribution from Libya

The Libyan Parliament is keen to develop its parliamentary diplomacy and foreign relations, and stands up for the belief that the unity of IPU Members is based on the desire to promote the values of democracy and equality.

The Libyan Parliament views the IPU as an important tool of parliamentary diplomacy which reflects a modern understanding of relations that is not restricted to executive authorities. It is also an opportunity for further coordination between the Member States.

When self-rule was declared in the province of Cyrenaica in 1941, the Assembly of Deputies was established and opened its first session in 1950 in the region with sixty members elected in urban and rural areas. With the independence of Libya came the adoption of the Libyan Constitution in

The House of Representatives passed a number of courageous laws that aim to support state institutions and achieve stability, including the law to dissolve all outlaw armed groups, and the amnesty law to promote national reconciliation.

1951, by which the parliamentary system was adopted. The first elections took place in 1952, and the legislative sessions of the Libyan Parliament lasted four sessions until 1969. During that period, the Libyan Parliament became a Member of the IPU. Libya has since seen periods of political change, including the coup of 1969, the February 2011 revolution and new parliamentary elections in 2014. The current parliament is composed of two hundred deputies from thirteen constituencies forming the total constituencies of the country.

The House of Representatives passed a number of courageous laws that aim to support state institutions and achieve stability, including the law to dissolve all outlaw armed groups, and the amnesty law to promote national reconciliation.

The biggest challenges faced by Libya are the weakness of the parliamentary experience, which has had a negative impact on the level of representation, the participation of civil society institutions and the relationship between the legislative and executive branches. This is why our commitment to participate in and support the work of the IPU is so important.

As the IPU enters the next chapter of its history, the Libyan Group would wish to use this participation to influence a number of issues:

The adoption of the Arabic language to encourage communication between Member Parliaments at all levels, and strengthening parliamentary cooperation on regional issues through improved communication, coordination between Member Parliaments and United Nations bodies and support for the enhanced participation of Member Parliaments.

Increased advisory support programmes, allowing the exchange of experiences that enables newer democracies to see best practice from advanced Parliaments; and more developed cooperation programmes between parliamentary research centres.

Increasing the political participation of the IPU by playing a greater role in the United Nations, and in regional issues such as the migration crisis.





Contribution from Liechtenstein

2019 was a special year for both the IPU and the principality of Liechtenstein: While the IPU celebrated its 130th anniversary, Liechtenstein marked its tercentenary.

Multilateralism is of central importance to Liechtenstein, especially with regard to problems that can only be solved through international cooperation.

Liechtenstein, which since 1868 has had no armed forces, cannot take its sovereignty for granted. Due to its small size, it has been and still is dependent on good neighbourly relations, strong global partners and the adherence to the rule of international law.

In its foreign policy, Liechtenstein is continuously committed to constructive and inclusive multilateralism.

As a world organization of national parliaments, the IPU is a vibrant group with 179 Members. Making the voice of parliaments heard, it can play a significant part in the debates and decision-making processes within the United Nations agencies. The IPU is also called to bridge democratic gaps in international relations.

In its domestic policy Liechtenstein is very committed to education. Sustainable education is a key topic of our time and the communication of values continues to play a central role. As legislator with budgetary sovereignty, our Parliament also sets the legal framework for education. The task of the State is to ensure that every curriculum is not only promoting the necessary transfer of knowledge, but also tolerance and respect among each other. These values form the foundation for a functioning society.

Furthermore, the individuality of each person is recognized by these values and everyone should have the opportunity to develop his or her potential. As one of the most industrialized countries, Liechtenstein is aware of the crucial role of education. Thanks to its dual education system that places equal value on vocational training and academic studies, Liechtenstein has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates at less than two per cent.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 SDGs provides a visionary blueprint for all Member States. The agenda includes goals that all countries of the world, regardless of their size, have to address.

Multilateralism is of central importance to Liechtenstein, especially with regard to problems that can only be solved through international cooperation. Liechtenstein also called for an efficient review mechanism for the implementation of the SDGs. Voluntary reporting to the High-Level Political Forum is an important tool in this review.

© Landtag of the principality of Liechtenstein



By implementing certain projects, Liechtenstein can even take on a pioneering role:

- Consistent promotion of solar energy has made Liechtenstein the “Solar world champion” since 2015 with the highest photovoltaic capacity per inhabitant.
- All municipalities in Liechtenstein are particularly committed to increasing energy efficiency and have been awarded the “Energy City” label. Liechtenstein is the world’s first “Energy Country”.
- With the project “Waterfootprint Liechtenstein”, Liechtenstein wants to become the first country to offer secure access to clean drinking water to as many people in developing countries as it has inhabitants.
- With the “Liechtenstein Initiative” the financial sector and the government make an important joint contribution to end modern slavery and human trafficking.
- The projects “Energy and climate pioneers” and “Energy and climate workshop”, which are also supported by the private sector, teach young people about the value of sustainability and empower them to play an active part.

Liechtenstein is making a substantial contribution to the implementation of the SDGs in developing countries within the framework of international solidarity. It supports projects on virtually all SDGs focusing on education (SDG 4), rule of law (SDG 16) and migration (SDG 10).

The commitment of the private sector in Liechtenstein is also worth mentioning. Charitable foundations alone spend around CHF 200 million annually on philanthropic projects. A further CHF 2 million will be raised by a large number of civil society aid organizations for humanitarian aid and development projects abroad. The government intends to further develop cooperation between state and private actors.



Contribution from Lithuania

The struggle for freedom and democratic values has played an important role in Lithuania's history. Membership of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of the IPU puts Lithuania on a par with other members of the global parliamentary community.

Lithuania has come a long way in its struggle for independence. The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania first joined the IPU in 1923 and the membership lasted until 1928. The ensuing Soviet occupation meant that Lithuania had to leave the IPU, only renewing its membership in 1990 after declaring independence. The membership has proved to be a continuation of the fight for democratic values. Welcoming the IPU's motto "For democracy, for everyone", we cherish and appreciate the opportunity offered by the IPU to contribute to building a better world and we put every effort into addressing the major global challenges.

The IPU has set important guidelines in its mission. Peace, democracy and human rights are the cornerstones on which we must build the world. In the spirit of freedom that brought the Lithuanian people together 30 years ago, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has actively taken the initiative to address acute issues in the region. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way, an icon of our struggle for freedom that took the shape of a human chain

spanning hundreds of kilometres from Vilnius to Tallinn, we are determined to encourage others to avoid fatigue from protracted conflicts and never turn a blind eye to violations of international law. Peace cannot be built at the expense of other countries. The IPU empowers us to speak out about problems on an equal footing, regardless of the size of the State.

Peace cannot be built at the expense of other countries. The IPU empowers us to speak out about problems on an equal footing, regardless of the size of the state.

We must continue to focus on gender equality and youth inclusion as we progress. The global model of equality and unity between men and women without discrimination should be reflected in every country. It is noteworthy that, while dealing with Lithuanian statehood issues, the Great Seimas of Vilnius recognised the democratic principles of equality between women and men as early as 1905 and declared the principles of universal parliamentary elections,

becoming one of the first parliaments in Europe to grant women suffrage. In the same vein, the first meeting of the Constituent Seimas in 1920 was chaired by Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, a writer and a prominent female public figure. This experience provides us with a good understanding of the importance of involving women in parliamentary work. Alongside this, we need to inspire young people to work together to build today's world and take shared responsibility for the future.

The guidelines drawn up by the IPU's mission are of great importance for the world of the future; not least in the matter of environmental protection. Only by protecting planet Earth will we be able to make tomorrow possible. The problems caused by pollution and climate change are already posing a threat to humankind. Inter-parliamentary dialogue ought to raise this issue in order to build global awareness on the gravity of the situation and the fragility of our planet.

Over the course of 130 years, the IPU has grown from an assembly of nine countries into a parliamentary forum bringing together as many as 179 Members and 13 Associated Members. This scope not only empowers parliamentarians from all over the world to speak to a wider audience, but also obliges them to hear what others have to say. Let us expand our horizons by hearing others out and building a better world through a deeper understanding.

© Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania



Contribution from Luxembourg

The Chamber of Deputies would like to take the opportunity of the IPU's anniversary to share one of its good practices: a public petitions system designed to modernize how we communicate with our citizens.

Ordinary petitions are traditionally submitted on paper to the President of the Chamber of Deputies. Since 2014, the Luxembourg Parliament has also made it possible to submit, consult and sign petitions on the Chamber of Deputies website.

Luxembourg media outlets have also begun systematically to publicize new public petitions when they open for signature, and even link to the Chamber of Deputies website for certain petitions.

This new tool is widely accessible: anyone who is at least 15 years old and enrolled on the national register of natural persons may start a public petition by filling in an electronic form. In other words, you are not required to be resident in Luxembourg or to be of age to lodge a complaint with the Chamber of Deputies by submitting a petition. The signatory's surname, given name and place of residence are not published unless the signatory decides otherwise.

Admissibility depends on the public interest of the petition's topic. The Conference of Presidents assesses the admissibility of public petitions, on the advice of the Petitions Committee.

When a petition is declared admissible, it is open for signatures on the Chamber's website for 42 days. A discussion forum is also set up on the Parliament's website for the same period.

In addition to the signing procedure on the Parliament's website, a public petition can also be signed by filling in a hard copy form available from the parliamentary administration. Signatures submitted on paper are not published on the website.

One of the main characteristics of the tool – which, judging by the evidence, is also one of the reasons for its success – is that if a public petition has received at least 4,500 signatures after 42 days, a joint hearing of the Petitions Committee and the relevant parliamentary committee or committees is held, attended by the minister or ministers with policy responsibility for the topic of the petition.

Up to six petitioners may take part in the hearing, which is also broadcast live on the Chamber's television channel. Accredited journalists as well as members of the public may also attend on the dais but are not allowed to contribute to the discussion.

© Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies



Luxembourg media outlets have also begun systematically to publicize new public petitions when they open for signature, and even link to the Chamber of Deputies website for certain petitions. This sort of media support also helps public petitions to be disseminated and contributes to their success.

If a public petition has not garnered at least 4,500 signatures after 42 days, the Petitions Committee converts it into an ordinary petition, provided that the petitioner agrees to this within a month. No public debate is organized in this case.

Between 1945 and March 2014, 328 ordinary petitions were submitted to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, whereas 924 public petitions were lodged between March 2014 and mid-June 2019.

Public petitions lodged since 2014 have mostly focused on questions about mobility, work, health and the environment.

Since the new facility was introduced, 30 public petitions have led to a public debate in the public hearings hall. The subjects raised covered a very wide range of topics: animal welfare, managing Lyme's disease, granting more time off work for family reasons, regional products in the catering industry and the legalization of cannabis.

There have even been two instances when public petitions advocating opposing sides of the same issue both received the requisite number of signatures to trigger a public debate. The petitions were respectively for and against the use of Luxembourgish as the primary official language for administrative and legal affairs; and a smoking ban in outdoor areas of restaurants.

In conclusion, the Chamber of Deputies is, in any case, determined to continue with its chosen approach to promote public petitions and further strengthen this modern facility, which has clearly been popular with our citizens.



Contribution from Malawi

The Parliament of Malawi has been a member of the IPU since Malawi reverted to multiparty democracy in 1994.

Since then, the Parliament of Malawi has participated in the majority of IPU General Assemblies. Through such participation, our Members both individually and collectively have benefited tremendously which in turn has assisted in entrenching parliamentary democracy in Malawi.

The uniqueness of the Parliament of Malawi is in the way it is dissolved every five years in readiness for general elections. The Constitution prescribes the exact date in the fifth year after an election. This ensures that the electoral calendar can effectively be put in place and activated with some degree of accuracy.

The Parliament of Malawi wishes to see the IPU move a step further by adopting effective measures to monitor and evaluate democratic principles in Member countries.

The Parliament of Malawi wishes to see the IPU move a step further by adopting effective measures to monitor and evaluate democratic principles in Member countries. In addition, the Parliament of Malawi would want to see the IPU make resolutions that are implementable in Member Parliaments and which works towards strengthening its rules to ensure that Member countries abide by those resolutions.

Furthermore, the Parliament of Malawi notes the positive contributions which geopolitical groups are making in facilitating discussions and resolutions of the IPU. However, the Parliament of Malawi would want to see space within the normal programme of a General Assembly to allow geopolitical groups to meet, preferably on the first day before the Official Opening of a General Assembly. This would provide the geopolitical groups enough space and time to touch base and strategize on various issues on the agenda.

The Parliament of Malawi strives to be more responsive to the interests of Malawians as espoused in our Constitution, Section 8 which provides that: "The legislature shall be responsible for the enactment of laws and shall ensure that its deliberations reflect the interests of all the people of Malawi and that the values expressed or implied in this Constitution are furthered by the laws enacted." In order to achieve this, the Parliament of Malawi has an active Committee system which is effectively engaging the other branches of Government. Further, realizing that rules and procedures of parliament have to be in tandem with modern democratic trends of transparency, accountability and accessibility, the Parliament of Malawi makes it mandatory for continuous review of the rules and procedures and that once every five years, a comprehensive review of the same is carried out.

The Parliament of Malawi would like to reiterate its commitment to the ideals and goals of the IPU and to take this opportunity to congratulate all members of this noble organization for 130 years of meaningful parliamentary democracies in the world.

Malawi Parliament Building by Timon Zingg licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 go to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/> to read the full licence text





Contribution from Mali

The IPU, which has more than 170 Member Parliaments, is the oldest universal and mainstream international political organization. It is considered to be an embryonic version of a world parliament in several respects. For parliamentarians, it is undoubtedly a unique forum where we can network and develop friendly, cooperative relations. For the National Assembly of Mali, it opens a broad vista to new horizons of international regulation and parliamentary diplomacy.

The National Assembly of Mali views its membership of the IPU as very important, and actively participates in the Organization's activities. The fifth Mali parliament session is currently sitting. During this session, the President and other members of the National Assembly of Mali have taken part in several missions throughout the world and have ensured that the National Assembly has attended all the statutory IPU meetings. We have relevant and fruitful exchanges, and dynamic cooperation with the IPU.

During this session, the President and other members of the National Assembly of Mali have taken part in several missions throughout the world and have ensured that the National Assembly has attended all the statutory IPU meetings.

The meetings are also forums for dialogue, consultation, exchanging ideas, lobbying and mobilizing resources with a view to strengthening the National Assembly's capacities, and we encourage parliaments and parliamentarians from all countries to share their experiences.

As part of the implementation of SDG 5 on gender equality, the National Assembly of Mali and the IPU held a workshop in Bamako on 27 and 28 February 2019 about strengthening women's representation in parliament.

The workshop was designed to help Parliament hold the government to account over gender equality; to encourage women to enter politics; to support work with political parties that would encourage women to stand for election by, for example, providing them with access to funding; and to raise awareness among parliamentarians, the media and the general public about the importance of women's representation in politics. Even though women make up more than half the population in Mali, they are underrepresented in positions of responsibility: poverty and illiteracy often hold women back from taking part in politics.

As part of the country's commitment to implementing the SDGs, the Government and Parliament of Mali have also put measures in place to promote women's empowerment. The measures are designed to improve maternal and child health, increase girls' access to education, combat violence against women and boost women's representation in parliament. In 2015, an Act of Parliament was promulgated that aimed to increase the number of women in parliament.

As a result, the proportion of women parliamentarians has risen from 9 per cent in 2009 to almost 27 per cent in 2016. A new step forward will have been taken in this direction at the next election when an act of parliament on gender equality will come into force. It will provide that all electoral lists in which more than 70 per cent of candidates are the same gender will not be accepted.

In the future, we believe that the IPU should strengthen parliamentary diplomatic relations with regard to conflict resolution both within and outside countries whose parliaments are IPU Members. Where governance is concerned, the IPU should be the crucible of a democracy where individual and collective freedoms are protected. There should be a focus on the rights of women and children, on protecting them in times of war, and on a functioning mechanism of restorative justice for these vulnerable people.

There should be a solid basis on which to boost solidarity between countries whose parliaments are IPU Members, so that States which are vulnerable to terrorism can be supported. Universal health insurance should be encouraged or promoted in countries whose parliaments are IPU Members so as to contribute to the health of mothers and all parts of society.

© Assemblée nationale du Mali



Contribution from Malta

On the occasion of the 130th anniversary of the IPU, we would like to address two major challenges that parliaments are facing today.

One of the greatest modern challenges for parliaments around the world is voter apathy and a general sense of distrust in politics. How can parliaments address these challenges in a decisive manner? One way to increase trust in politics is to make the legislative administration more modern and democratic.

Malta passed a bipartisan Parliamentary Services Bill in 2017 making its Parliament autonomous from government in the way it organizes its business, in being responsible for its staffing and in controlling its own budget. The main function of the parliamentary service is to provide administrative and support services to the House, to Members of Parliament and to committees.

One way to increase trust in politics is to make the legislative administration more modern and democratic.

The IPU stands for promoting, protecting and strengthening democracy around the world. Parliaments have a responsibility to engage the public, and youth involvement in elections is particularly vital, especially when considering that first-time voters are more prone to absenteeism. Young people might opt to avoid voting as a political protest because they distrust politics and are not able to identify themselves with any candidate or movement. Nonetheless, absenteeism remains an issue which needs to be addressed. Politicians, and parliamentarians in particular, have to work harder to engage young people in politics to safeguard and strengthen democracy. Young people have a stake in society and there is an urgent need for action by the world's parliamentarians to address the under-representation of young people.

In 2018, the Parliament unanimously granted 16-year-olds the ability to vote in every election in the country. Malta was among the first 10 countries in the world to extend voting rights to 16-year-olds. Besides lowering the voting age, Parliament also promotes youth participation by co-organizing "youth parliaments" with the National Youth Council. This offers young people the opportunity to participate in a mock parliamentary session alongside sitting parliamentarians, in which they debate several themes chosen by them and conclude with various resolutions.

Parliament also organizes a number of activities where students of all ages meet with the Speaker and Members of Parliament to make proposals and suggestions to improve society in a debate with the legislators. We also hold special sessions with students

focusing on particular issues, such as the environment. All these activities and special sessions serve to raise awareness about the functions of Parliament and the importance of youth engagement.

Another tool at parliamentarians' disposal is to legislate to protect the electorate from online disinformation campaigns. In a highly digital world, personal data is becoming a valuable currency and parliamentarians have a responsibility to secure citizens' privacy. Parliamentarians could be trained on how to communicate on social media, with specific guidelines on how to spot disinformation and misinformation links and news. Fighting disinformation in the era of social media and online platforms must be a coordinated effort involving all relevant actors, from institutions to social platforms, from news media to single users. On this subject, the IPU may spearhead guidelines and good practice to increase digital literacy.

© Malta Parliament

Contribution from Mexico – Chamber of Deputies

The great occasion of celebrating the 130th anniversary of the IPU reminds us that its aims were to accomplish a peaceful international order, which means that diplomacy and parliamentary dialogue have to prevail even at wartime or when international tensions are a real threat to peace amongst nations.

Over the past few years, the social and political scenario has changed, and we face complex challenges, such as terrorism, violent extremism, climate change, inequality, hardening of immigration policies and a growing xenophobic discourse. The IPU has shown its capacity to build effective communication bridges between parliaments across the world to find democratic solutions to those challenges.

The 64th Legislature is the result of free, authentic and universally recognized elections, representing the Mexican yearning for an effective suffrage.

The actions of the IPU have made an impact in around the world. This is reflected in the growing interest of nations to be part of the movement. Today there are 179 Member parliaments and 13 Associate Members, which means that it is close to gaining global membership.

In view of this effort, the Mexican Congress, as a member of the IPU, assumes a double commitment. It is one that derives from the respect and historic tribute of its long lasting diplomatic and public tradition, through

important actors as Gilberto Bosques Saldivar, Isidro Fabela Alfaro, Narciso Bassols García and Luis I. Rodríguez; all notable examples who endorsed the Mexican ideology of justice and friendship within countries. Mexico has also demonstrated its commitment to the IPU with the leadership of Deputy Gabriela Cuevas Barrón as the President of the IPU. She has been involved in the IPU goals, including important resolutions on issues related to children and migrants' rights, warfare prevention, international cooperation regarding the SDGs, and gender equality.

The 64th Legislature of the Chamber of Deputies is at the core of the political transformation of Mexico, With the Mexican Legislative Branch striving to be a model of best practice and a milestone in the region in terms of democratic transformation and institution strengthening.

The 64th Legislature is the result of free, authentic and universally recognized elections, representing the Mexican yearning for an effective suffrage. MPs who are part of this Legislature represent the culmination of a democratic transformation initiated 30 years ago.

This is why we have a strategy to rebuild national institutions, according to the principles of austerity, honesty, transparency, accountability, political integrity and gender equality. In fact, our 64th Legislature slogan is: "The Legislature of Gender Equality" because 258 men and 242 women compose the Chamber of Deputies and 65 men and 63 women the Senate.

A year has gone since we took the oath in this new legislature. Through this period, we achieved a historic budget reduction without compromising our functions and mandate.

In addition, we are processing and discussing a new Mexican Congress Act, which transforms our State Reform Body, endowing it with efficiency in its legislative work and dignifying its function as an effective counterbalance to the Executive Branch.

This is a response to the great challenges in our national democracy, strengthening parliamentary and committee work, research services and coordination and intense dialogue between the two Chambers of Congress.

We are launching the civil service as the foundation of a more professional and effective Congress in the fulfilment of its constitutional powers, constitutional review mechanisms and relevant procedures to ensure transparency, access to government information and accountability.

Within this reform project, we are convinced of the importance of promoting gender equality and respect for women's rights. Our legislative body has achieved an historical gender parity composition and we are permanently implementing gender-responsive policies.

The current Legislature has performed acts that symbolize the transition to a progressive majority, a new era, born from popular fights, and recognizing those who came to Mexico in the hope of a new life and acknowledging migration as a human phenomenon protected by our Constitution.

Our vision is to be an Open Parliament, taking all demands in consideration, in a permanent search for agreements and consensus. We seek to lead the country to a higher level of plural coexistence and social inclusion. Mexico wants to share this vision during the 130th anniversary of the IPU. We wish to commemorate the IPU's historic legacy through democratic actions of cooperation and friendship between all parliaments across the world to promote peace, sustainable development and justice.

© Mexican Chamber of Deputies



Contribution from Mexico – Senate

In the 130th year of the IPU, the Mexican Senate wishes to honour the only global parliamentary organization, as well as restate its sharing of the IPU's principles and values.

Mexico joined the IPU in 1925, left in 1928 and re-joined in 1973. Since then, the members of the Mexican Congress have been active participants in the two annual assemblies, in parliamentary hearings, Conferences of Speakers of Parliament, as well as in meetings regarding specific themes within the United Nations framework.

Mexican legislators share the mission of the IPU, and support its outstanding work in peacebuilding, democracy, human rights, gender equality, the empowerment of youth and sustainable development. The assembly, comprised of parliamentarians from around the world, has been crucial in the establishment of fairer and more efficient norms, as well as better societies.

We believe the IPU has managed to remain a relevant organization in an increasingly volatile world because of its commitment to espousing its foundational values: equality, inclusion, respect, integrity and solidarity.

Mexico has much in common with the IPU, including outstanding legislative practices such as transparency, accountability, sustainable development and the application of a gender-sensitive perspective; in all these areas, our Congress has made important strides.

Throughout its history, the IPU has established itself as an organization by and for parliamentarians. Its Secretary General, Martin Chugong, has communicated that the Organization will continue to assist parliaments around the world to ensure they acquire and apply the right knowledge, tools and best practices to ensure their work meets the highest standards. In this endeavour, the Mexican Congress will continue to be a reliable ally.

The objectives outlined in the Strategy for 2017-2021, including building stronger and more democratic parliaments; promoting gender equality and women's rights; protecting human rights; empowering youth; rallying parliaments around the global agenda for development, and resolving the democratic deficit in international relations, evidence some of the challenges the Organization is responding to, in the context of ever-changing challenges. As the President of the Organization, Gabriela Cuevas Barron has stated that democracy, human rights, multilateralism and the rule of law are facing increasing threats.

Hence the IPU is the only global platform on which parliamentarians can make their voices heard, and where they can work to follow through with international commitments that their respective governments have adopted, including the Paris Climate Accord, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Pact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to name a few.

Mexico's commitment with the IPU has been consistent, and further bolstered through every meeting we have participated to. Our interest in presiding over the IPU should serve as further evidence of our commitment to the Organization. Beginning in October 2017, the support for Mexico's candidacy for the Presidency of the IPU is an undeniable vote of confidence from our peers, which encourages us to keep moving forward and to continue collaborating with this parliamentary forum.

Our commitment to the IPU has also been showcased through the adoption, in April 2019, of the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments, which aim to bolster parliamentarians' capacities to fulfill their duties.

Mexico has much in common with the IPU, including outstanding legislative practices such as transparency, accountability, sustainable development and the application of a gender-sensitive perspective; in all these areas, our Congress has made important strides.

We are delighted that, in the context of such an important anniversary for the IPU, both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate have achieved gender parity. The Senate of the Republic, comprised of 128 members, includes 65 men (50.7 per cent) and 63 women (49.2 per cent). Similarly, out of the 500 members represented in the Chamber of Deputies, 259 are male legislators (51.8 per cent) and 241, female legislators (48.2 per cent).

To further elaborate on these strides, it is worth noting that in order to best address both transparency and access to information concerns, the Mexican Congress has designated specific offices. Both Chambers must abide by the Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information (2016), which requires us to share information that is in the public's interest, such as the expenditure of legislative bodies, the salaries awarded to public officials, and information regarding legislative work.

In regards to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Senate has an active Working Group committed to partnering with the Executive branch to ensure that all objectives are effectively met.

Our progress reflects our commitment, support and solidarity with the current and forthcoming work of the IPU. Parliamentarians face many challenges, but by working through them alongside the IPU, we will succeed in fostering a more favourable environment for the development and advancement of our citizens.

© Mexican Senate



Contribution from Mongolia

In 1206, near the Onon river in the great Asian plateau, leaders of Mongolian nomadic tribes and renowned warriors with ordinary backgrounds gathered for a grand assembly, Huraldai, to declare the establishment of the Great Mongol Empire and the enthronement of Temuujin as Chingis Haan.

By gathering attendees from both dignitaries and commons with distinguishable endeavors and making a decision with consensus, the Great Huraldai was the first form of parliamentary practice in Mongolia. Over the next 700 years of historical ups and downs, the State Hural, the Mongolian legislative institute, was reestablished with a new form with Upper and Lower Chambers in 1914.

In January 1992, the unicameral State Great Hural of Mongolia, a representative legislative organization, was established with a mission to develop a humane, civil and democratic society while ensuring the people's authority on governance.

In accordance with the adoption of the latest Constitution in January 1992, the unicameral State Great Hural of Mongolia, a representative legislative organization, was established with a mission to develop a humane, civil and democratic society while ensuring the people's authority on governance.

To fulfill this mission, the State Great Hural of Mongolia has been actively engaged in interactive tools to maintain a closer connection with voters and ensure their participation in the governance. As is a common practice in many other IPU Member Parliaments, the Mongolian parliament has a dedicated TV channel to publicize information regarding its decisions and adopted legislations as well as the activities of its Secretariat to the general public.

Moreover, in order to efficiently disseminate updates on its activities, the State Great Hural of Mongolia utilizes other multimedia tools including its website. This bilingual site not only ensures swift and transparent circulation of the latest news but also enables and provides an alternative channel for the citizens of Mongolia to participate in the legislative processes which was guaranteed by the Constitution of Mongolia.



Contribution from Myanmar

Myanmar was a member of the IPU from 1957 until 1963 when the Parliament was abolished by the coup d'état in 1962. After the general election in 2010, its Parliament was reestablished in 2011 and Myanmar rejoined the IPU in April 2012.

The Myanmar Parliament (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) is bicameral and consists of the House of Nationalities (Amyothar Hluttaw) and the House of Representatives (Pyithu Hluttaw). Delegations from the Myanmar Parliament regularly attend the IPU General Assemblies and the experiences are reported back to the Parliament. The Myanmar Parliament also takes part in the activities initiated by the IPU such as International Democracy Day commemorations and Scaling Up Nutrition Movements. The IPU has assisted Myanmar with the induction course for freshmen parliamentarians, various capacity development programmes for parliamentary staff and the development of an IT system in Parliament.

The IPU has assisted Myanmar with the induction course for freshmen parliamentarians, various capacity development programmes for parliamentary staff and the development of an IT system in Parliament.

development of an IT system in Parliament. As the organization of parliaments all over the world for 130 years, the IPU helps and nurtures newly emerging parliaments to be able to play their role of legislation, representation and monitoring with the respective governments. By participating in IPU activities there will be more parliament-to-parliament and people-to-people contact, cooperation and understanding among the family of nations.

mmar

© Myanmar Parliament



Contribution from Namibia

Namibia joined the IPU shortly after independence in 1990. The IPU is one of the parliamentary platforms where Namibian MPs play a significant role in drawing up and adopting important international instruments and exchanging views on matters of mutual interest.

Namibian parliamentarians have played and continue to play a significant role in the reform of the IPU. They have served and continue to serve on relevant IPU structures and committees.

In order to strengthen the Namibian legislature, the IPU is invited to conduct a needs assessment exercise that targets both MPs and the supporting staff that are crucial in the execution of the mandate of Parliament.

The 99th IPU Conference was hosted by Namibia in April 1998, at the invitation of the Namibian National Assembly and attracted a total of 994 delegates, including 567 parliamentarians. The late Hon. Dr Mosé Tjitendero served as a member of the IPU Executive Committee for four years.

The late Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly from 2005 to 2015, was elected as President of the IPU in 2008. He helped forge a partnership between the United Nations and the IPU, using his experience as a former President of the UN General Assembly from 1999 to 2000.

The current Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter H. Katjavivi, was elected to the Committee on United Nations Affairs, which was formed in 2007 to connect parliaments with United Nations activities and goals on a global scale.

The Chairperson of the National Council, Hon. Margaret Mensah-Williams previously served two terms as the President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians. She was also a member of the IPU Executive Committee until 2018.

Ms. Mensah-Williams was recently elected as co-Chair of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization and serves as the Vice-Chairperson of the High-Level Advisory group on Countering Terrorism and Extremism. She is also a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in 2020.

In March 2018, the Secretary of the National Assembly, Ms. Lydia Kandetu, was elected to the Executive Committee that brings together Secretaries General and other senior officials and clerks in charge of parliamentary services.

Namibia contributes to IPU debates. The Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Africa Group of Countries, championed the emergency resolution introduced by the Dutch delegation at the 140th IPU General Assembly in Doha, calling for urgent humanitarian support for the peoples of Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe after Cyclone Idai in 2018.

Namibia hosted more than 60 parliamentarians from 14 SADC countries for a two-day conference in September 2015. The event, organized by the Namibian Parliament in partnership

with the IPU and UNICEF, was aimed at mobilizing parliamentarians to leverage resources for scaling up and strengthening nutrition programmes and policies.

The gender sensitivity exercise organized jointly by the IPU and the Namibian Parliament took place in February 2018. This was to take stock of progress made in gender representation by the Namibian Parliament following a seminar held in 2016 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Namibian Parliament is hailed as one of the most progressive parliaments in the world on women representation.

The Centre for Innovation in Parliament is a partnership between the IPU and parliaments to support parliamentary innovation through improved use of digital tools, developing and sharing good practices in digital transformation strategies in areas such as the strategic planning of digital tools and services; parliamentary openness, open standards and open data; citizen engagement in the work of parliament; internet and social media; electronic document and records management, and digital library and research services.

There are several areas of future cooperation. For example, Members of Parliament lack the necessary skills needed to carry out their oversight function, specifically related to budget formulation and implementation. Capacity-building for Namibian MPs to enable them to influence the budgetary process and hold the Executive to account on policy implementation is a possible area for future cooperation.

In order to strengthen the Namibian legislature, the IPU is invited to conduct a needs assessment exercise that targets both MPs and the supporting staff that are crucial in the execution of the mandate of Parliament.

The IPU felt it wise to seek the commitment of national parliaments in the achievement of the SDGs. The IPU created a platform, with guidance on how each Member Parliament can engage with the SDGs and the development partner support that could be tapped into to facilitate this exercise. The Namibian Parliament intends to use this platform to enhance its capacity in assessing the realization of SDGs whilst linking this effort to the country's own development plans and programmes.

The Namibian Parliament wishes to see and belong to an IPU that can facilitate the transformation of the SDG agenda into everyday realities. It also wishes to promote strong, diverse, democratic and inclusive parliaments with an enhanced element of youth participation and gender emancipation. Furthermore, all our Parliaments should adapt and be responsive to global technological innovations and advancements.



Contribution from Namibia



Contribution from the Netherlands

The Dutch delegation of the States-General, representing both the Senate (Eerste Kamer) and the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer), congratulates the IPU on its 130th anniversary. Starting in 1889 with a small group of MPs, the IPU evolved through the years to become the world's largest parliamentary platform discussing global issues, democracy and human rights. This is a great achievement.

Since its early years, the Netherlands has participated in the IPU. We have seen the IPU grow into an international organization assisting and advising parliaments to strengthen their capacity and to modernise, holding governments to account, improve their budget capacity and enhance transparency. The IPU has also paid a lot of attention to equal representation of women in delegations to the IPU meetings as well as in parliaments. Many parliaments are moving away from their traditional male-dominated membership towards promoting equality. The IPU was the first organization to provide platforms for women MPs to meet and exchange ideas and to work together to draw more women into politics. These are valuable

The added value of the IPU is in bringing parliamentarians together on a regular basis giving them the opportunity to meet, to learn from each other and to discuss international topics, exchanging views or tabling urgent issues which need attention.

achievements of the IPU and it should continue to be involved in these issues in the coming years as many women still do not have equal rights and face discrimination, and democracy. Respect for human rights and peaceful dialogue around the world cannot be taken for granted.

The added value of the IPU is in bringing parliamentarians together on a regular basis giving them the opportunity to meet, to learn from each other and to discuss international topics, exchanging views or tabling urgent issues which need attention. Dialogue, bridging differences, and exchanging views, are all important elements that contribute to the work of parliamentarians in their own national parliaments and in the end improving the lives of the people.



© Hans Kouwenhoven

Members of the IPU share the principles of democracy and free dialogue. One of the most important tasks of the IPU is protecting and defending the human rights of individual MPs in the Member States. By approving the work of the Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians during the Assembly meeting, all IPU Members support its decisions and show parliamentary solidarity. This important but difficult task should continue.

Sharing best practices on making parliaments more effective is one very valuable element of the IPU. The States-General of the Netherlands appreciates the opportunity to learn from the best practices of other parliaments and is willing to share its initiatives to improve its legislative and supervisory role. The States-General of the Netherlands is focusing on improving the position of both chambers, in terms of information security and quality of the civil service. Another aim is to involve more citizens in parliamentary work. A concrete example is the recent experiment of the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment in the House of Representatives organising a webinar on debt. During the webinar more than 200 participants shared their experiences and answered questions. The Chair of the Committee, leading the debate, and several MPs together with two experts were in the studio discussing issues with the participants. This was the first time that the House called for a larger group of people to share their experiences on a specific topic in this way. According to the organizing committee the webinar was a great success.

We wish the IPU a successful future, further cooperation and valuable exchanges between people bringing us closer to peace.

© Jeroen van der Meijde



Contribution from New Zealand

The IPU must be aspirational and relentless in advancing democratic values, the rule of law, and strong, representative institutions, and in promoting gender equality and human rights.

New Zealand has a strong international reputation as an accountable and transparent democracy. We were the first country in which women won their right to vote, and we have long fostered Maori representation in Parliament. The change to a mixed member proportional electoral system in 1996 was a significant step to ensure that our House of Representatives reflects the diversity of our citizens. We are proud that women make up over 40 per cent of MPs, and many are in leadership positions. Nevertheless, while celebrating strengths, we recognize that we also have to constantly work at maintaining the diversity of New Zealanders' representation and engagement with Parliament.

As the world evolves, so must parliaments. Technological developments and legislative, societal, and political changes can all prompt changes in the ways that parliaments work.

Over the last few years, New Zealand's Parliament has worked to strengthen its democracy and to encourage the public to participate. We have had to critically evaluate people's perceptions and implement changes to be more focused on their needs. We have also had to confront access barriers for underrepresented or unreached communities, including young people, LGBTIQ+ people, and people with disabilities, and to closely examine Parliament as an institution and a workplace, to confront negative behaviours.

To strengthen democracy, all members of the IPU need to consider the balance between tradition and innovation, and the need for regular review and reform. The institution of parliament jeopardises its legitimacy if it loses its relevance and its responsiveness to the people.

As the world evolves, so must parliaments. Technological developments and legislative, societal, and political changes can all prompt changes in the ways that parliaments work. To this end, we need to be open to exploring new technologies and how they apply in the parliamentary context. The IPU's burgeoning Centre for Innovation in Parliament is an excellent platform to share best practice and lessons about digital and social media.

It is important to take stock of the effectiveness of our institutions. Parliaments as institutions should engage in critical self-review and continuous improvement. New Zealand, for example, abolished its upper chamber last century, and created a strong committee system to undertake detailed scrutiny of legislative and financial proposals and outcomes. Our secretariats provide the institutional memory for Parliament and are key guardians of democracy. More recently, we established Officers of Parliament: The Controller and Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, to carry out important work, separate from the Executive Government.

The IPU presents a unique opportunity to leverage expertise and deliver practical support among regions. New Zealand is in, and of, the Pacific, and we work in partnership with parliaments in the region to share knowledge and support. The IPU facilitates the sharing of



knowledge and experiences among MPs. We learn from each other, as all democracies strive to improve and strengthen democracy.

The IPU is also a body of peers through which we can hold each other to account. This includes any breaches of our commonly agreed democratic values and behaviours that endanger or impede MPs from executing their duties.

The IPU is made up of parliamentarians; while our representatives are often cross-party, we are not Executive Government. Foreign policy is viewed by some as the realm of the Executive. However, New Zealand parliamentarians who participate in IPU activities come away with a deeper understanding of these global issues and commitments. They gain knowledge, data, and tools, not only to hold Government to account, but to constructively feed into policy debates, and influence legislative outcomes and government investment.

When the IPU was established in 1889 there was no established means to work together across nations. Our world's population was an estimated 1.65 billion in 1889; today it is over 7.35 billion. We now have established and strong multilateral systems. However, the challenges facing the world are vast: climate change and extreme weather, ocean acidification, food and water scarcity, terrorism and violent extremism, economic shocks, and many more cross-sectoral issues.

So where does the IPU go from here? Firstly, we need to share our stories effectively; by doing so we will build and retain our membership. Secondly, the IPU should foster networks with other partners, share information, and coordinate activities to make the most of limited resources and get the best possible outcomes for our Organization and the people we serve. Finally, the IPU must not lose sight of its core mandate: to promote, protect, and strengthen democracy.



© New Zealand Parliament

Contribution from Nicaragua

The National Assembly of Nicaragua joins parliaments worldwide with sincere delight to celebrate 130 years of the IPU and wishes it to continue contributing to peace, security, parliamentary and governmental democracy, through political and inclusive dialogue as a legitimate expression of the democratic exercise.

We consider that the IPU, today being led by a Latin American woman, is the very expression of a challenge that has been overcome with dedication to achieving the best results.

In 1965, the Nicaraguan National Congress became an official Member of the IPU. The resolution to request the affiliation of the Congress to the IPU was signed by Mr. Juan José Morales Marengo on 15 March 1965 and was accepted at the meetings held in May 1965 in Dublin, Ireland.

Since 1985, the National Assembly has participated actively in the conferences, assemblies and related meetings promoted by the IPU. In 1987, the Republic of Nicaragua had the honour of hosting the 77th IPU Assembly, an event that offered international support to the nascent Nicaraguan Parliament at a time when the country's Political Constitution had recently been approved.

Nicaragua and the IPU are committed to the promotion of parliamentary diplomacy, the empowerment of women with gender equality and equity, intercultural policies, the protection of indigenous and Afro-descendant people, the development of parliaments through technology, the strengthening of the fight against climate change, and the leading role that young people have, as well as in all other matters that demand the attention of international legislatures.

For the Members of the National Assembly, contributing to a gender-sensitive parliament has been a great challenge; not only of a legislative, political, ideological or generational type, but even more formidable, cultural. That is why we consider that the IPU, today being led by a Latin American woman, is the very expression of a challenge that has been overcome with dedication to achieving the best results.



© National Assembly of Nicaragua

Parliaments around the world require the support and interest of international organizations and forums such as the IPU, which help improve the management of parliamentary multilateral cooperation, in order to meet the SDGs. It is important to give continuity to seminars, workshops and regional meetings on issues related to the SDGs, creating spaces for legislators to exchange ideas, knowledge and experiences, and in this way, acquire new information to progress the agenda of national and international development.

Conscious that we are in a changing world, with great challenges, we must continue to strengthen initiatives that allow us to influence our societies in a positive way, with social and intercultural inclusion, by incorporating native and Afro-descendant representatives of the Nicaraguan Caribbean coast to our legislature.

We place our confidence that the IPU will continue to develop a fluid and dynamic relationship with parliaments, with the purpose of strengthening international relations and parliamentary diplomacy, in the sensitive areas that require more attention from our parliaments and governments.



Contribution from Nigeria

The Nigeria National Assembly is located in Abuja which is the seat of government in Nigeria. It is a bicameral legislature made of the Senate which has 109 members and the House of Representatives which has 360 members. Apart from the National Assembly, which is the Federal Legislature, there are 36 other unicameral parliaments in the 36 States that make up Nigeria; these parliaments are referred to as State Houses of Assembly making Nigeria's legislative arrangements one of the largest democracies in the world.

Through Nigeria's delegations, members of the National Assembly have been able to share experience and exchange democratic ideas and ideals as well as the best applicable strategies of building and sustaining global democracy and development.

Since the return of Nigeria to legislative democracy in 1999 the country has diligently subscribed to and fully participated in the activities of the IPU as well as localising the instrumental affiliates of the IPU such as Women in Parliaments and the Young Parliamentarians Forum. The participation of Nigeria's delegations in the IPU General Assembly debates, committee deliberations, seminars and workshops has contributed to building the capacity of participating members over the years. Through Nigeria's delegations, members of the National Assembly have been able to share experience and exchange democratic ideas and ideals as well as the best applicable strategies of building and sustaining global democracy and development.

It is important to note that what defines us as a Member of the IPU is the fact that we represent the voice of a global village, a free people that has a say in the way their world is governed and guided towards total emancipation, socio-economic and political improvements and development; there is a sense of ownership of a global institution that stands for the justice, freedom equality and development of all people and races.

The commitment of the Nigeria Parliament to the tenets and statutes of the IPU resonates from the role the IPU plays in building parliaments and parliamentarians of Member States and the assistance given to Member States on requests, during the implementation of projects and programmes targeted at sustainable democratic development and building the capacity of parliaments and parliamentarians.

The IPU General Assembly is a plenary platform where participating parliaments are given the opportunity to contribute to the debates, express opinions on issues highlighted for discussions and other areas that might generate from the theme of the convocation. However, there is a need to improve on the approach to conflict resolution between IPU Members.

Inclusion of state, regional and provincial parliaments in the activities of the IPU through an extended platform of the IPU is important for a country like Nigeria that has a total of 36 State Houses of Assembly. This initiative will go a long way in building the legislative capacity of parliamentarians at grassroots level and speed up the process of legislative autonomy which is a serious challenge with grassroots legislative bodies especially in developing democracies.

Nigeria's National Assembly Building by Kabusa16 licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0
go to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en> to read the full licence text



Contribution from North Macedonia

The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia has been a member of the IPU since 1994 and shares its vision, mission and commitments for representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective parliaments.

A representative parliament is characterized as a “mirror of the nation”, which includes both women and men, the young and old, the wealthy and poor, and reflects the different ethnic groups and religious affiliations within a society, as well as the political will of the population. The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia is composed of representatives of eight ethnic communities from different political parties, with various educational and vocational backgrounds. 39.17 per cent of the parliamentarians are women and 26.66 per cent are younger than 40 years old, making the Assembly socially and politically representative, and committed to equal opportunities.

One of the specific features of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia is the procedure of adopting laws and decisions that directly affect culture, use of language, education, personal documentation, and use of symbols of the ethnic communities that are not in majority in the country. In these cases, the Assembly adopts decisions by a majority vote of the parliamentarians attending, within which there must be a majority of the votes of the parliamentarians attending who belong to communities not in the majority in the population.

A representative parliament is characterized as a “mirror of the nation”, which includes both women and men, the young and old, the wealthy and poor, and reflects the different ethnic groups and religious affiliations within a society, as well as the political will of the population.

The Assembly publishes an Annual Report on its activities, as one of the tools aimed at greater accountability and transparency towards the citizens it represents. The report contains details on plenary sessions and committee meetings, international activities of the parliamentarians, public and oversight hearings, and many other activities.

At the moment, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia is implementing an eleven-year project: the Swiss-supported Parliamentary Support Programme (PSP). This programme aims to assist the Assembly in gaining institutional credibility and public trust by safeguarding citizens’ interests and needs and by more consensus-oriented and inclusive debate and decision-making.

The project supports the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia through consensus-building, structural reform, and capacity building in the Assembly’s institutional development; its legislative and oversight roles; and its institutional transparency and accountability.

Promoting, protecting and strengthening democracy around the world, while maintaining the ongoing relevance of the founding values and principles of the IPU is not an easy task.

The IPU should continue to engage with parliaments, as effective institutions, in overcoming the key regional and global challenges, as well as consolidating and developing parliamentary democracy worldwide. Furthermore, the IPU needs to focus on next level of democracy and

actively participate in its creation and development, not forgetting the inclusiveness, equality and empowering of the people all over the globe.

As the first forum for political multilateral negotiations promoting peace, the IPU has a duty to maintain its vitality and find new forms of engagement and policy solutions to global problems. We as parliaments need to work together in order to achieve a unified response to the challenges we may face in the future. It is important that joint contributions unite parliaments in common goals.

Being legislative bodies, parliaments have a key role in their states. The IPU needs to facilitate parliaments to take concrete actions to respond to the poverty, climate change and other present and future situations that demand active parliaments who should be able to respond promptly.

The objective of the Organization, which was initially the arbitration of conflicts and later evolved into promotion of democracy and inter-parliamentary dialogue, should evolve further in new forms of parliamentary diplomacy and mobilization around the development agenda, in order to address growing global inequalities.

The IPU, as a unique organization made up of national parliaments from around the world, can do much for further development of the international collaboration of parliaments and increase its role in building bridges between nations.

© Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia

Contribution from Norway

The Norwegian Parliament – The Storting – has a long history with the IPU. Norwegian MPs have participated in the IPU since the second IPU assembly in London in 1890. The Storting hosted the 9th IPU assembly in 1899. The Norwegian Christian Lange served as the IPU Secretary General from 1909 to 1932 and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1921 for his work.

The current Norwegian delegation to the IPU believes that the IPU must strive to make itself relevant with regard to the big challenges facing the world today. We, the Members of Parliament directly elected, represent the people of the world and should therefore be an important voice that must be heard by today's decision makers. Regardless of the relationship between states and governments, we believe it is always important to have some kind of dialogue. The IPU has been and should continue to be a venue for such dialogue between the representatives of the people of all nations of the world.

The Norwegian delegation would like the IPU to ensure that both men and women, young and old are represented in the Organization and that the IPU communicates this inclusive representation as an important factor in achieving a more democratic world. The IPU must

also work to make sure that minorities are represented in the parliaments around the world. To be a Member of Parliament and a representative of the people should be something that is safe from threats, harassment and violence; this must always be on the IPU's agenda.

Norway is a small, open country with an active foreign policy. We are open to international cooperation and dependent on an international system based on the rule of law.

Norway is a small, open country with an active foreign policy. We are open to international cooperation and dependent on an international system based on the rule of law. Important issues for us, and we believe also for the IPU, are human rights, free trade, gender equality, freedom of speech, the environment and peace and security.

We believe that in the future the IPU must work to become even more representative. The number of women and young people that participate in IPU meetings should increase. The Norwegian delegation is very pleased with the fact that IPU has created a Forum for Young Parliamentarians. We would also welcome universal membership. It is important that even the smallest nations of the world can make its voice heard in an organization such as the IPU.



Contribution from Oman

The IPU is the most important organization that deals with legislative and oversight matters around the world. Its importance stems from its keenness to bring peace and stability to the world and achieve prosperity and development.

Today, our world is witnessing challenges that affect every corner of our planet and directly touch people's lives. Therefore, the IPU should play an effective role and have a presence in discussing these vital issues through its Members. We hope that the IPU's impact will be evident and its decisions put into action through parliaments, paving the way to an international community where people are given their rights and welfare through a comprehensive commitment. Achieving this goal needs more serious collaboration and more sustained efforts from us all.

We urge all Member Parliaments to pay more attention to education and knowledge. We should all work towards reaching our destination and help each other.

We have a commitment that we should fulfil before our people and the entire world. This commitment requires us to be advocates of peace, love and harmony, because development can't be achieved without peace and security. We are committed, in the Sultanate of Oman, to this principle, and it constitutes a fundamental element in our work at all levels. We believe that this principle should be adopted by all Member Parliaments to make a better future for the welfare of all our people.

We urge all Member Parliaments to pay more attention to education and knowledge. We should all work towards reaching our destination and help each other. We should agree common goals, strategies, plans and programmes that we can all implement in our countries. Education and knowledge are the key to our success.

We call all Member Parliaments to effectively use their influence and pay more attention to sustainable development in their respective countries. The parliamentary practices should aim at overcoming the challenges we face by developing strategies and policies.

We are certain that the IPU will be more effective and present if we join hands and collaborate to achieve these noble goals. Through this cooperation we can move forward and sustain the prestigious position of our organization. We should all work for a more effective IPU.



Contribution from Pakistan

The IPU has come a long way in providing an inter-parliamentary mechanism to exchange ideas, share expertise and best practices, and jointly work towards addressing common issues through dialogue and understanding.

Effective, dynamic and transparent parliaments hold the key to robust democracy, good governance and realizing the 2030 global sustainable development agenda. Similarly, parliamentary diplomacy holds the potential to revive and reinforce political dialogue towards peace and cooperative development.

The way forward for us, therefore, lies in helping to build, strengthen, equip and modernize Member Parliaments towards effective legislation, oversight and representation, thereby reinforcing democracy and good governance.

Effective, dynamic and transparent parliaments hold the key to robust democracy, good governance and realizing the 2030 global sustainable development agenda.

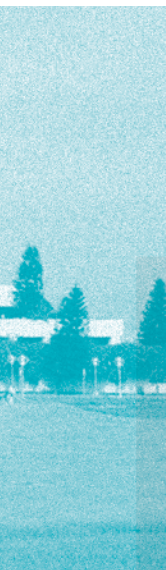
The Senate of Pakistan has introduced a number of procedural, legislative, policy, administrative and reformatory measures; institutionalized best practices and amended rules of procedure, to make its internal working matrices, procedural mechanisms, proceedings, and decision-making more representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

The Senate's website enables the public to access information about debates, daily journals, session synopsis, committee reports and more. Proceedings of the Senate are also webcast live on the website. Furthermore, a public petition table has been established for citizens to submit their petitions on the Senate's website.

The Senate of Pakistan has also identified the need to engage youth. These include multiple internship programmes, and "Know your Parliament" sessions where students and other members of the public can visit the Senate Museum and Constitutional Alley to learn about political and parliamentary history. Furthermore, an active presence on social media platforms continues to help the Senate to effectively communicate with the public at large.

Core internal decision-making forums such as the House Business Advisory Committee and Finance Committee have been strengthened to ensure fiscal and administrative good governance.

© Parliament of Pakistan / Hassan Mahmood



In the future, we hope to see a broadening in the IPU's role, by becoming an active partner, facilitator and enabler on the ground with Member Parliaments to strengthen representative democratic institutions, and to realize commonly-cherished ideals of robust democracy, durable peace, rule of law, inclusive development, respect for human rights, and effective conflict resolution.

We, the IPU Members, being a collective fraternity, must make concerted efforts to redefine the IPU's role by making concrete plans of action.

What defines us is not just our good intentions and commitments but affirmative action and practical steps backed by strong political will for change, defining the IPU as a melting pot of consensus, understanding, mutual respect and multilateral cooperation in the twenty-first century.

We are united in our commitment to strengthening democratic representative institutions, creating inclusive, peaceful and rights-based pluralistic societies, and by building bridges between people, public representatives and state functionaries in order to influence and prompt both policy and legislative interventions towards mainstreaming those who are marginalized.

We are committed to achieving our core objectives of peace, democracy and progress; core values that will be duly ingrained in our plans of actions and frameworks, and strategically enshrined in our resolutions, communiqués and treaties as roadmaps for future.



Contribution from Poland

Poland has been a member of the IPU since 1921, and in 1959 hosted the 48th IPU Assembly.

The contribution of the IPU to promoting the principles of democracy and international law and to protect human rights is indisputable. In today's dangerous world, this is of particular importance. We are facing unprecedented challenges, such as terrorism, hybrid wars, migration crises and climate change. These make the world ever more unstable and unpredictable. The world order, based upon the predominant belief that democracy is the best form of government, human rights are universal and inherent, and international law should form the foundation of international relations, is abraded systematically. Military forces are increasingly used as a tool to change state borders.

The Polish Members of Parliament support developing countries on the IPU's forum. Keeping in mind the support we have been offered in difficult times in our history, we now wish to share that solidarity with others.

Currently, the Polish Group of the IPU is composed of all Deputies and Senators: 560 Members of Parliament. The current work is coordinated by the Management Board of the Polish Group of the IPU, composed of representatives of all parliamentary clubs. Apart from participating in the statutory sessions, seminars and conferences held under the auspices of the IPU, groups of bilateral international cooperation operate within the Polish Group of the IPU. In the term between 2015 and 2019, 85 such groups operated. This form of cooperation allows for exchanging experiences and familiarizing with good practices in the partnering parliaments, and offers a valuable addition to the bilateral international cooperation between governments.

Poland accords great importance to threats arising from climate change. In December 2014, at the COP24 summit, the Polish Group, in cooperation with the IPU, hosted nearly 200 parliamentarians from all over the world in Kraków. Effectively limiting climate change will help mitigate the adverse impact on ecosystems and human health and reduce adaptation needs and at the same time facilitate the achievement of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

The Polish Members of Parliament support developing countries on the IPU's forum. Keeping in mind the support we have been offered in difficult times in our history, we now wish to share that solidarity with others. This is also an investment in global stability and security. We engage in the international community's actions to implement the SDGs – combating poverty, promoting social development and aiding communities affected by armed conflicts.

The issue of migration and refugees is more and more frequently at the heart of the IPU. Poland has consistently advocated for a systematic vision of actions; one that provides for assistance and effective response to the challenges closest to the sources of humanitarian and migration crises, as opposed to an unconditional, automatic reception of all migrants. Meanwhile, we are strengthening our relations with the major partners of the global humanitarian system. In 2018, Poland signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Our parliamentarians met the ICRC representatives not only on the occasion of the session of the IPU held in Geneva, but also during the ICRC President's visit to Poland.

We appreciate the fact that the IPU acts as a bridge between members of parliaments who represent the people's will, and governmental and non-governmental international organizations. We hope that the global importance and authority of the IPU as an organization of such remarkable history will be further strengthened.

© Kancelaria Sejnu (Chancellery of the Sejm)

Contribution from Portugal

It is an honour and a privilege to associate the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal with the 130th anniversary celebrations of the IPU.

Portugal ranks among the first countries to have joined the IPU, at the 3rd Assembly in Rome in 1891. Today, we remain fully committed to the Organization's goals. We count on an across-the-board consensus in our Parliament as regards the significance of the IPU, enhanced by a dynamic Parliamentary Delegation, actively engaged in its geopolitical group and in furthering the IPU's agenda.

The IPU was a forerunner in advancing multilateralism and has always been an exponent of parliamentary diplomacy. Since its foundation, the IPU has had the vision and the ability to adapt to different environments. With its 179 Members and 13 Associate Members, the IPU is a universal organization, benefiting from a strategic partnership with the United Nations, whose goals it shares and contributes to. We add a parliamentary dimension to global governance.

Portugal ranks among the first countries to have joined the IPU, at the 3rd Assembly in Rome in 1891. Today, we remain fully committed to the Organization's goals.

Political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action are the IPU's working methods. The mission is clear: upholding human rights, working for peace and security, striving for gender equality and empowering youth, providing an input to the international agenda. The output is remarkable. One case in point is the Resolution adopted in the IPU's 141st Assembly, held in Belgrade, Serbia, in 2019. It calls all parliaments to take all legal and policy measures to achieve universal health coverage by 2030. It is an ambitious yet pressing task. It goes to the IPU's core purpose: working for our citizens and for a better and cohesive world. Advancing progress has always been our hallmark. It is our responsibility to honour the IPU's illustrious history and to prepare for the challenges ahead of us.



Contribution from Qatar

On 30 June 2019, the IPU and all parliaments of the world celebrated its 130th anniversary.

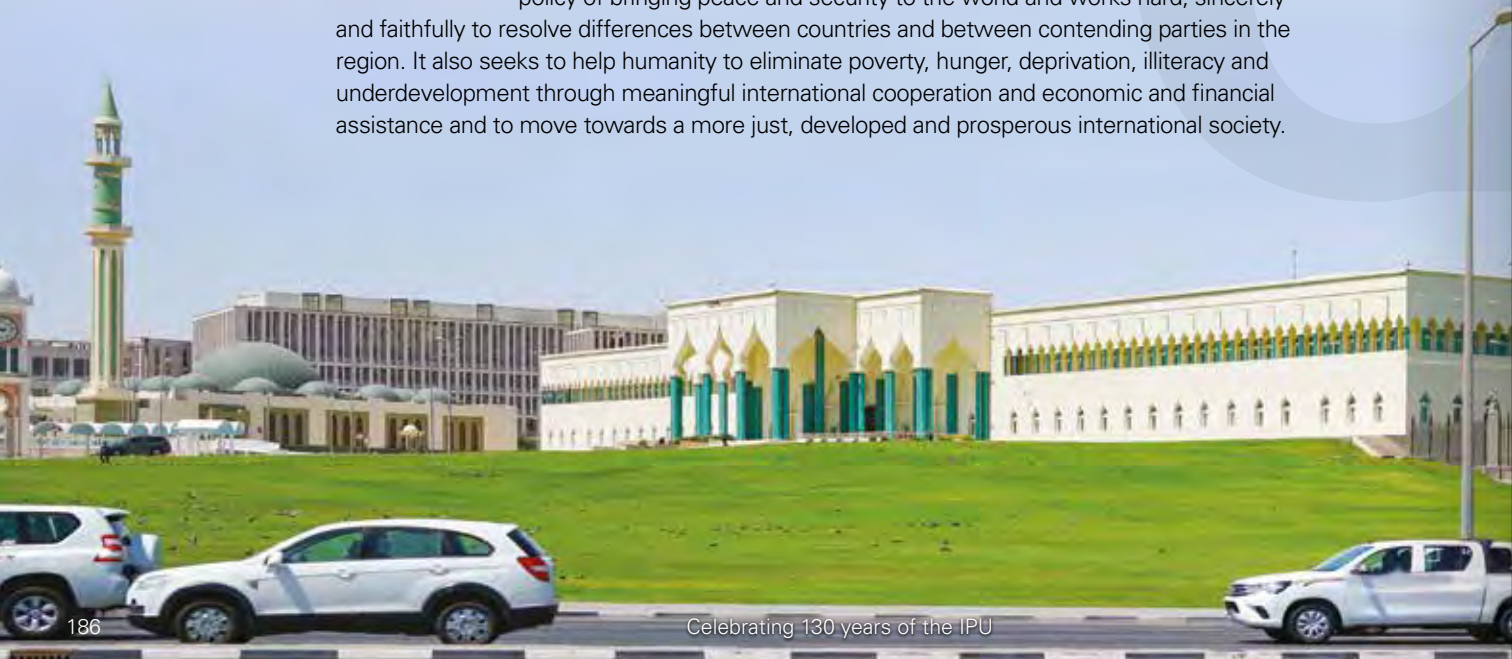
The IPU began as an organization that brought together parliamentarians from a few countries; yet today it is a global organization of 179 parliaments from different continents and is working hard to reach out to all parliaments of the world and unite them in one powerful international institution to achieve the goals for which the IPU was established; in particular the establishment of security and peace among the countries of the world, the empowerment of its people to develop sustainable economic development, and to live in safety in democratic systems that respect human rights, public freedoms and to enjoy prosperity

Since joining the IPU, the Shura Council in the State of Qatar has committed to realizing the objectives for economic and social development, which are considered to be the essential pillars for achieving international peace and security. In April 2019 the Shura Council of the State of Qatar's hosted the 140th General Assembly of the IPU and related meetings in Doha. The General Assembly was attended by a record number of parliamentarians, organizations and parliamentary unions.

Since joining the IPU, the Shura Council in the State of Qatar has committed to realizing the objectives for economic and social development, which are considered to be the essential pillars for achieving international peace and security.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, delivered a speech that included references to the main themes of the policies that the State of Qatar is pursuing both internally and externally.

At a national level, Qatar continues to maintain its development policy aiming to realize the welfare of its citizens and all residents of Qatar. At the international level Qatar, in cooperation with various peace-loving people, continues its policy of bringing peace and security to the world and works hard, sincerely and faithfully to resolve differences between countries and between contending parties in the region. It also seeks to help humanity to eliminate poverty, hunger, deprivation, illiteracy and underdevelopment through meaningful international cooperation and economic and financial assistance and to move towards a more just, developed and prosperous international society.



The Shura Council of the State of Qatar believes in the goals that the IPU is working towards. The Shura Council confirms its continuous adherence to these commitments and its willingness to continue coordination and cooperation with the IPU in the coming years to achieve the goals of the IPU and implement its planned programmes, which are aimed at enhancing world peace and security, working towards comprehensive and sustainable development in the world, as well as supporting parliamentary institutions and strengthening their legislative and supervisory role; strengthening their presence at the international level through parliamentary diplomacy, which must not work only to resolve differences and disputes between countries, but also to take all preventive initiatives aimed at avoiding these differences before they arise.

We in the Shura Council of the State of Qatar will play our full part in this humanitarian mission and we will not spare any effort in supporting the Presidency of the IPU and its Secretariat, in which we have found commitment, seriousness and honesty in implementing the decisions and objectives of the bodies of the IPU.



© Brian S / Shutterstock.com

Contribution from Romania

The Romanian Group proudly celebrates the 130th anniversary of the IPU. As a Member of the IPU since 1891, our Parliament's contribution to the first ever international parliamentary forum has been a rich and meaningful one, commensurate with our commitment to the vision and goals of the IPU.

Throughout this time, many Romanians have left their mark on the work of the IPU in areas such as the peaceful settlement of international disputes, the reduction of armaments, the development of international law, and international criminal justice. Irrespective of the different historical and political contexts, the Romanian Group has never ceased to take an active part in shaping the IPU's international profile as it stands today.

According to the statutes adopted by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in 1990 after the fall of the totalitarian regime, "the Romanian IPU Group, fully sharing IPU's principles and objectives, upholds the participation of Romanian parliamentarians in bilateral and

On this anniversary, the Romanian Deputies and Senators representing the Romanian Parliamentary Group reaffirm their commitment to further promote the values of the IPU and uphold its mission as the driving force of parliamentary action for the wellbeing of people worldwide.

multilateral inter-parliamentary activities and their active collaboration with parliamentarians from other States, with a view to promoting the ideals of liberty and democracy, developing representative institutions, achieving the aspirations of peace, understanding and cooperation of all peoples in the world, in accordance with the goals endorsed by the United Nations."

The Romanian Group comprises all the members of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. It was so decided in 1990, with a view to raising awareness across parliament about the unique value and features of this forum and enabling as many Romanian parliamentarians as possible to engage in the IPU's activities, according to their expertise, objectives and interests. Since then, our group has actively contributed to the processes aimed at enhancing the IPU's role and relevance in relation to its Member Parliaments and the United Nations, and has firmly supported the IPU's initiatives and projects aimed at promoting representative democracy with stronger parliaments, and robust international parliamentary decision-making.

During the last decades, as part of its contribution to the work of the IPU, the Parliament of Romania hosted the 94th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in 1995, and three regional seminars: on the contribution of parliaments to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2014, parliaments and the SDGs in 2015 and 2016, and the regional conference "Making laws work to end violence against women and girls" in 2017.

Since 2004, the Romanian Group has published a half-yearly Information bulletin presenting its activities and those of the Parliamentary Friendship Groups, our Parliament's contribution to UN-related activities, as well as the main events in the life of the IPU and its most recent publications.

In 2016, our Group celebrated 125 years as a Member of the IPU. Under these auspices, the Parliament of Romania unanimously adopted a Declaration on the Sustainable Development Goals, thus becoming the first parliament in the world to consecrate through a political document its engagement in the national implementation of the SDGs. On this occasion, the Romanian Group commended the IPU “for its significant contribution in upholding, strengthening and securing international recognition of the crucial role of parliaments in achieving the 2030 Agenda”, and pledged “to mobilize its expertise and resources with the aim of acting as regional hub of the IPU in fostering good governance and sustainable development.”

Today, when the world is facing an array of unprecedented challenges, the role of the IPU in mobilizing parliaments to advance the SDGs is of crucial importance for its Members, and should be prioritized and reinforced, as a defining feature of the Organization.

The Romanian Group will continue to be part of these efforts, while supporting what it believes to be the IPU’s major assets: its universal vocation, its outstanding expertise in strengthening parliamentary democracy, and its partnership with the United Nations, with significant potential towards enhancing parliamentary input in international processes, and the implementation of global decisions at country level.

On this anniversary, the Romanian Deputies and Senators representing the Romanian Parliamentary Group reaffirm their commitment to further promote the values of the IPU and uphold its mission as the driving force of parliamentary action for the wellbeing of people worldwide.



© Palace of Parliament

Contribution from The Russian Federation

The Parliament of Russia, the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, is a bicameral body consisting of the Federation Council and the State Duma. In its functions, the Federation Council complies with the general concept of an “upper” chamber, while the State Duma that of a “lower” chamber, though Russian laws do not provide for such a classification.

Bills are adopted by the State Duma and then submitted to the Federation Council for further consideration. If they are approved, they are sent to the President of the Russian Federation to be signed into law. A significant difference between the chambers lies in the fact that elections to the Duma are based on party-list proportional representation, with parties passing the 5 per cent electoral threshold forming parliamentary factions. The Federation Council is formed on the regional principle: it consists of two representatives from each of the 85 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, one from the legislature and one from the executive authorities of each constituent entity.

The Federation Council, also dubbed the “chamber of the regions,” represents the interests of the constituent entities at the federal legislative level, harmonizes their interests with those of the federal centre and promotes real participation by constituent entities of the Russian Federation in making crucial state decisions.

Russia sees parliamentary diplomacy as an effective tool in seeking a unifying agenda in today's international relations.

It opens up broad opportunities for popularizing the ideas of parliamentarism, helps familiarize the people of Russia with the work of the Federation Council and regional authorities, and allows members of the Chamber to find effective legislative solutions to problems of socioeconomic development of constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

The Chambers maintain regular contact with parliamentarians of other countries, including through joint working groups and international parliamentary organizations, with relations with the IPU playing a special role in this collaboration.

The Resolution of the Federation Council of 19 July 2017: “Declaration of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on Russia’s Participation in the Activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union” confirms the Chamber’s commitment to the Common principles for Support to Parliaments adopted at the 195th session of the IPU’s Governing Council, as well as Russian parliamentarians’ interest in bolstering the IPU’s role in joint efforts to build a fair and democratic world.

The Russian Federation has twice hosted IPU assemblies. In 1998, the IPU held its 100th Conference in Moscow and, in 2017, the 137th Assembly was held in St Petersburg, welcoming a record number of delegations and speakers.

In St Petersburg, in the Resolution of the IPA CIS: “On the 20th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy: Sharing Our Diversity” a proposal was made for a commemorative

day to be established on 30 June: The International Day of Parliamentarism. This proposal was subsequently enshrined in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/278: “Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union” of 22 May 2018.

At the 137th Assembly, it was proposed that a World Conference on Inter-Faith and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue be held in Russia on 21 May 2022. This proposal was recorded in the final declaration of the 137th Assembly and included in a 2018 resolution of the United Nation General Assembly, receiving final approval of the Governing Council of the IPU at the 140th Assembly in Doha in 2019. The date of the conference is not accidental: it was selected so that the conference would take place on the World Day of Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development instituted by the United Nations General Assembly, and the year 2022 was selected to coincide with the end of the International Decade for Rapprochement of Cultures declared by UNESCO. We are pleased that the conference is scheduled to be held in Russia, a country where different faiths, peoples and ethnic groups have been living in peace and amity for centuries.

Russian parliamentarians are confident that, in the future, the role of the IPU, one of the most influential parliamentary organizations and the most universal and representative of those in existence today, will only increase as the IPU pursues the values of parliamentarism and parliamentary diplomacy in both word and deed.

Russia sees parliamentary diplomacy as an effective tool in seeking a unifying agenda in today’s international relations. As legitimate representatives of the peoples of their countries, law-makers, like no others, have the capacity to ensure priority of international law in inter-country relations, to advance the central role of the United Nations, and promote the ideas and principles of democracy and parliamentarism globally.

© The Federation Council press-office



Contribution from Rwanda

Since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the Parliament of Rwanda has played an interchanging role in subsequent legislatures. Parliament's role has changed from legislating, oversight and representation to budget approval and vetting public office appointees.

More importantly, Parliament has extended its circle of interest in foreign policy. Parliamentary delegations participate in the work of international organizations such as the IPU, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Pan-African Parliament. The potential influence of the Rwanda Parliament in the legislative output is very significant within and without the borders of the Republic of Rwanda.

One of the hallmarks of post-genocide Rwanda is inclusive politics. Most of the world's poorest people are women. Currently we are creating programmes and policies to address this imbalance. The Rwanda Parliament is on record as having the largest number of women in any legislature worldwide at 61 per cent; this is as a result of political will.

The potential influence of the Rwanda Parliament in the legislative output is very significant within and without the borders of the Republic of Rwanda.

We also believe that youth is the future of any progressive society, and it is against this background that the leadership in Rwanda is encouraging young people with skills in the ICT Sector, vocational training, and leadership to help give our country a competitive edge in the global arena.

As we celebrate this milestone for the IPU, the pursuit and maintenance of peace and promotion of development in solidarity lie at the core of the mission of the United Nations and its entire system.

The current global development agenda differs in significant ways from those that preceded it; it is ambitious, revolutionary, transformative, and universal.

For it to succeed, this agenda demands a radical and unprecedented paradigm shift; we can't hold or reverse the continued destruction of our natural habitat or the rising global atmosphere temperature without a change in contemporary production and consumption patterns. We also can't hold or reverse the persistent widening gap between the rich and the poor among our nations without deeper international cooperation and genuine reform of the existing inequitable international system. The current system is inherently structured to enrich a few and impoverish the many. It can't therefore deliver on a key aspiration and objective of the 2030 Agenda: that of "leaving no one behind".

The IPU, as a global body for legislatures across the world, should work around the clock to correct the current global system inherently structured to enrich a few and impoverish the many; to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and to advocate for peace, justice and progress; we believe this can only be achieved by transforming persistent-widening income inequalities among nations.

What we learned 74 years ago, with the formation of the United Nations, is that we must be each other's keeper; we must allow ourselves, as people and even more so as nations, to belong to one another.



© Rwanda Parliament

Contribution from San Marino

The San Marino Group was established in 1987 pursuant to the resolution adopted by the Great and General Council in October of the same year to join the IPU.

In September 1988, the Group adopted its own Rules of Procedure containing provisions on the appointment of a President, a Vice President and a Secretary General.

San Marino is convinced that in the coming years the IPU will continue its efforts to preserve peace and encourage dialogue, and also focus on disarmament, contrast inequalities, manage the flow of migrants and, last but not least, fight the emergency of climate change.

The Republic of San Marino submitted its application for membership of the IPU in October 1988 and was officially admitted as a Member of the Organization in March 1989, at the 81st Inter-parliamentary Conference held in Budapest.

Currently, the San Marino Group is composed of 16 members representing all the lists elected to Parliament and reflecting the proportion of parliamentary groups.

The Republic of San Marino firmly supports the IPU and strongly believes in its crucial role to protect and strengthen democracy worldwide.

San Marino is convinced that in the coming years the IPU will continue its efforts to preserve peace and encourage dialogue, and also focus on disarmament, contrast inequalities, manage the flow of migrants and, last but not least, fight the emergency of climate change.



© MSS/CH / Shutterstock.com



Contribution from Senegal

In 1889, when Englishman William Randal Cremer and Frenchman Frédéric Passy founded the IPU, there were two objectives:

- To enable governments and parliaments to improve international cooperation; and
- To promote peace among the people of the world.

Later, in light of the context at the time, the IPU focused its work on defending human rights, particularly the rights of vulnerable groups including women and children.

In the future, the IPU would benefit from taking a more comprehensive approach to the other challenges that confront humanity, such as climate change, with the consequences it entails, such as natural disasters, floods and drought. At various IPU meetings, the case would need to be made for decision makers from across the world to commit to a reduction in CO2 emissions to reduce global warming to acceptable levels.

Countering terrorism is the second challenge that confronts us. The IPU should also devote time to taking action that would put an end to this problem. The third challenge the IPU must face is a cause of conflict: arms proliferation. Its most serious work is how to control access to nuclear and chemical weapons. The fourth issue to which the IPU should devote attention is the fight against poverty, hunger and illnesses throughout the world.

In addition to holding the required debates on these subjects, it would be beneficial for Members to take the same debates to their national parliaments. It would be advantageous if parliamentarians could be made aware of these issues and of the resolutions that are adopted at the meetings of the IPU. Workshops or meetings can provide opportunities to remain in contact with various United Nations offices stationed in each country. The IPU could invite national parliaments to take ownership of the subjects debated at IPU Assemblies and, if necessary, legislate on particular issues.

It will be equally important for each national parliament to make the International Day of Parliamentarism a permanent fixture.

In terms of good practices, the National Assembly of Senegal is proud to share with the IPU a law that provides for comprehensive gender parity in all elected and semi-elected assemblies.

In terms of good practices, the National Assembly of Senegal is proud to share with the IPU a law that provides for comprehensive gender parity in all elected and semi-elected assemblies. The law has become emblematic of Senegal. Other Member Parliaments of the IPU could

draw on it to increase the number of women MPs in their institutions.

To improve the IPU's visibility in various countries whose parliaments are IPU Members, each parliament could be asked to use the IPU logo and support the Organization's initiatives during any international events. With IPU Assemblies in mind, each Member could also make a declaration in line with the IPU's objectives and discuss its own contribution and involvement from the time it joined until today.



Contribution from Serbia

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been marked by complex international relations. The period of unipolar world that characterised the twentieth century has finished, and contemporary international relations are in a strong and dynamic transition to multipolarity.

In such a complex global environment, the IPU is celebrating its 130th anniversary. The main motto of its founders was the fight for international peace and rule of international law. It is the consistency of its approach, as well as its full 130-year-long continuity in functioning and action that confirm and recommend the IPU as an organization with a global role and significance in contemporary and future complex international relations.

In the forthcoming period, the National Assembly of Serbia shall continue to commit to achieving the common goals promoted by the IPU and towards enhanced cooperation with the Organization itself and its Members.

The National Assembly of Serbia is fully committed to the goals of the IPU as defined in its Statutes and other documents and in this context plans and coordinates its participation in its work. This applies primarily to the promotion of peace and active international cooperation, the promotion of democracy and democratic institutions, and the rule of law. In this respect, the efforts of the IPU, its resolutions and other activities, play a key role in the efforts of the delegation of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

The IPU, as an organization with 179 Members and of global significance, has an essential responsibility to work towards its goals by enhancing the parliaments themselves and their scopes of work, as well as by strengthening parliamentary democracy and democratic institutions through the application of appropriate mechanisms of multilateral and parliamentary diplomacy. More specifically, by promoting and instilling its programmes and goals, the IPU is in a position to strengthen the importance and role of parliaments as legitimate bases and guarantors of democratic political systems, regardless of the form of rule, and for the purpose of guaranteeing and achieving stable international relations on the path to global peace and stability.

In the forthcoming period, the National Assembly of Serbia shall continue to commit to achieving the common goals promoted by the IPU and towards enhanced cooperation with the Organization itself and its Members.



Contribution from Singapore

In 1967, the Singapore National Group of the IPU was constituted. The Group's inaugural report stated: "With membership in the IPU ... our parliamentary connections have greatly widened... Like CPA, the IPU holds an annual conference to which we may send delegates. In the years to come, these Conferences will doubtless provide our Members with excellent opportunities of meeting their counterparts not only in the Commonwealth, but also from a wider community."

Since then, our Members have regularly participated in IPU General Assemblies. Through such meetings, our parliamentarians have broadened their perspectives from the discussions and sharing of experiences with their international counterparts on regional issues and matters of mutual concern. They have also forged and maintained close and enduring friendships with these peers through the years, with invitations for the Singapore National Group to embark on study visits to other parliaments. In return, we have hosted numerous visits by IPU parliamentarians.

Singapore parliamentarians will remain steadfast in keeping abreast of the current issues and staying connected to our citizenry for an effective and thriving democracy in Singapore.

Over the decades, Parliament has been the arena for deliberating and deciding a young nation's future. From the 1950s to the mid-1960s, it had occasionally seen fierce and long debates. Following Singapore's independence in 1965, the House engaged in many serious debates on developing its economy, educational system and social infrastructure.

Today, the House continues to debate on the refinement of policies to meet the country's challenges. Ensuring adequate representation, yet maintaining political and social harmony, are complex issues that national parliaments face. In the Singapore context, the key features addressing this issue include the Non-Constituency MP (NCMP) scheme introduced in 1984, and the Nominated MP (NMP) scheme in 1990.

Under the NCMP scheme, opposition candidates who polled the highest percentage of votes amongst those not voted into their contested two constituencies will be appointed as NCMPs. In this way, the views of those who voted against the government and alternative views are represented in Parliament. Up to 12 NCMPs can be appointed to form the minimum opposition representation.

The NMP scheme allows for wider representation of non-partisan views in Parliament. The public nominates candidates who are interviewed by a Special Select Committee comprising elected MPs. The Committee will submit the names of recommended candidates to the President for appointment as NMPs. NMPs come from a whole spectrum of interest groups representing academia, labour unions, environmentalists, business groups, professions, arts and sports associations. Up to nine NMPs may be appointed for a term of two and a half years.

Besides adequate representation, the discussions and decisions in Parliament must continue to be relevant to resonate with the electorate. To achieve this, Parliament must remain open, informative and accessible. Having a social media presence is essential for engaging citizens in today's age of digital technology.

In 2018, the Singapore Parliament launched an official Facebook page as another platform for updating Singaporeans on what goes on in Parliament, with easy access to parliamentary documents such as Order Papers, the list of MPs speaking, and the Bills introduced at each sitting.

We also launched the Parliament Instagram account in 2018 to offer citizens both in the country and abroad a more light-hearted take on the business of the House.

In line with Singapore's Smart Nation initiative, we are moving towards being a paperless Parliament. Launched in 2019, SG-PARL MP is a new sitting day app that lets Members conveniently access parliamentary documents for a sitting from their smart phones or tablets, from anywhere and at any time. These documents include Sitting Day notices, Order Papers, Bills, Hansard, statutes, circulars and reports. As an additional feature, Members receive notifications on the adjournment of Parliament and resumption of sitting times, as well as updates on the availability of sitting day documents. We are currently working on three enhancements to facilitate even more mobile-friendly two-way transactions, and towards the development of an e-Secretariat.

As our nation continues to tackle the challenges of an ever-changing world to maintain our competitive global edge, Singapore parliamentarians will remain steadfast in keeping abreast of the current issues and staying connected to our citizenry for an effective and thriving democracy in Singapore.

Contribution from Slovenia

Being the oldest international parliamentary organization, the IPU represents the framework of global parliamentarism, which is based on the promotion, protection and strengthening of democracy around the world. New global challenges experienced by the international community also present a challenge to the IPU, which can only be tackled with unified and effective action.

Since 1993 when we joined the IPU, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia has been actively involved in its work, considering it one of the key factors of global parliamentary diplomacy. In the future, the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between parliaments will indeed play an important role in the search for solutions to the challenges faced by the international community.

In the future, the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between parliaments will indeed play an important role in the search for solutions to the challenges faced by the international community.

In the light of the above, considerable importance is also attached to the close cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations, within which the IPU has held the status of permanent observer since 2002. Such cooperation allows the parliamentary perspective to reflect in global processes, while concrete results of cooperation are shown, in particular, in the adoption of the necessary measures in the field of climate change and health for all. The role of parliaments in this process should be further strengthened in the coming years, particularly in relation to the management of crises around the world.

The IPU should, in cooperation with the United Nations, continue its activities in pursuit of sustainable development goals. Reducing poverty, taking action on climate change and ensuring better health are essential for the well-being and welfare of all people. Only a unified approach and joint action can produce the desired results, thus guaranteeing a better future for the world and the generations to come.

Through its active approach over the past years, the IPU has developed universal values and principles to empower Members of Parliament and strengthen democracy around the world. With its programmes, it also helps parliaments to become stronger, younger, more gender-balanced and thus more representative of all people.

The National Assembly pays special attention to gender issues. In 2006 it adopted the National Assembly Elections Act, which stipulates that no gender should be represented on a candidate list with less than 35 per cent of the total number of candidates. In the current parliamentary term, 27.77 per cent of its Members are women, and 23.33 per cent of the Members are under 40 years of age. In order to strengthen the role of women, the National Assembly also established the Women Parliamentarians Club, which is actively involved in the international activities of the National Assembly.

The National Assembly pays particular attention to the openness of parliament by providing information and materials and by running its own website, which publishes content relating to parliamentary work and provides access to documents relating to plenary sessions and committee meetings, as well as to verbatim records and transcriptions of sessions. Since 2008, the Radio and Television Corporation of Slovenia has been broadcasting plenary sessions and committee meetings and fully informing the public on all other parliamentary activities on the “Parliamentary Channel”.

Professional journalists, non-professional journalists, bloggers and NGO employees, as well as other representatives of the interested public, can enter the Parliament and attend sessions, press conferences and public events. The National Assembly is visited by numerous elementary schools, secondary schools and students, and, less frequently, by kindergartens. There are also many other civil society groups and groups of interested citizens visiting the Parliament. In cooperation with other institutions, the National Assembly occasionally performs simulations of plenary sessions, known as the Children's Parliament or Students' Parliament.

Another area that Slovenia is paying close attention to is the rights of the child and education about the rights of the child. Thus, on 16 November 2009, the National Assembly became the first parliament in the world to become part of the UNICEF network of Safe Spots.

© Državni zbor / Matija Sušnik.



Contribution from South Africa

The South African Parliament has been a member of the IPU since 1994. We value our association with this 130-year-old forum that brings together diverse cultures, languages and ideologies to freely discuss and act together on common issues facing humanity.

The founders of the IPU, Frédéric Passy and William Randal Cremer, were active in the international peace movement. This is important for us because peace is necessary for growth, dignity and equality.

South Africa will always appreciate the efforts of the IPU efforts to recognize and celebrate the centenary birthday of our first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela. His contribution to advancing peace, human rights, reconciliation and democracy in the face of racism and economic and gender equality, must continue to encourage us to live his dream.

Our membership of the IPU and our attendance at the Assemblies and related meetings, present us with a platform to share best practices and to contribute positively towards humanity's pressing challenges.

Nelson Mandela was an internationalist and a leader who strove to accommodate other views in the quest for peaceful solutions. Our membership of the IPU and our attendance at the Assemblies and related meetings, present us with a platform to share best practices and to contribute positively towards humanity's pressing challenges.

Our Parliament was honoured to host the 118th IPU Assembly and related meetings in Cape Town in April 2008. The focus of that Assembly was "Pushing back the Frontiers of Poverty".

Eleven years later, poverty and inequality are still problems. Increased globalisation and technological innovation have not, in themselves, reduced inequality. The goals of mainstreaming sustainable development, human rights, peace and security, gender inequality and inclusive, transparent, representative and effective governance remain as urgent as before.

The permanent observer status of the IPU at the United Nations General Assembly has broadened the role of parliaments in global affairs. This has translated into roles, decisions and resolutions to find solutions in complex issues like violent extremism, terrorism and growing inequalities.

© Parliament of RSA



The ability to consult, debate and even implement some of the decisions and resolutions taken at the IPU, provides legitimacy and authority on any level of international governance. We suggest that initiatives to monitor implementation of resolutions should be developed.

Parliaments represent the people and their hopes. We also represent aspirations and achievements on behalf of our people. We are affected by socio-economic and political factors beyond our borders and continents. Working together with other parliaments, our efforts to improve the quality of the lives of those we represent are enhanced.

In his last address to the South African Parliament in March 1999, President Mandela said: "To the extent that I have been able to achieve anything, I know that this is because I am a product of the people of South Africa," and he further said: "To the extent that I have been able to take our country forward to this new era, it is because I am the product of the people of the world who have cherished the vision of a better life for all people everywhere. They insisted, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, that vision should be realized in South Africa too. They gave us hope because we knew by their solidarity that our ideas could not be silenced since they were ideas of all humanity."



Contribution from South Africa

Contribution from Spain

We are celebrating a great idea: the creation of a global organization, the first permanent political organization in the world, that allows the co-joined work of parliaments and parliamentarians to solve international conflicts through multilateral cooperation between nations. Due to this organization, the Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration (1899), the League of Nations (1919) and the United Nations (1945) were created. Its promoters and up to eight IPU Members were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Nowadays, 179 nations work together following the Universal Declaration for Democracy through our parliaments, representing more than 6,500 million people all over the world in the promotion, protection and strength of democracy, the rule of law, equality, human rights, sustainable development and peace, building more equal and inclusive societies.

The IPU deserves a tribute for the 130 years of sharing efforts for parliaments to work cooperatively, and we look forward to the IPU remaining a useful and indispensable organization for our world.

Spain has been very active in the IPU. At the time of writing, the Spanish MP Mr. José Ignacio Echániz, chief of the Spanish Delegation, is the Chairperson of the Committee on Peace and International Security. The rest of the Spanish Delegation Members have contributed to all the Sessions, Statutory Assemblies, Meetings of the Geopolitical Group 12+ and Sectorial Meetings, leaving their mark in all the documents and debates, assisted by very professional clerks and technicians from the International Directorate of the Spanish Cortes Generales.

Spain wishes to contribute actively to the future of the IPU, an organization in which we desire to work improving the instruments for dialogue, and for sharing experiences and politics, improvements in governance and in good parliamentarian practices.

We consider that there are also opportunities for reducing bureaucracy in such a complex organization as the IPU.

We also consider that there is a gap to be filled in the general awareness of the IPU between parliamentarians and their citizens. In the same way, there is a necessity for strengthening and improving relationships with the United Nations; working in a much more effective, efficient, and complementary way.

The Spanish Delegation at the Parliamentary Hearing in UN headquarters, February 2019: Mrs Micaela Navarro, Mrs. Carmen de Aragon, President Mr. Ignacio Echaniz, Mr Ander Gil, Mr. Joaquin Garcia and Mr. Anton Gomez-Reino



© Secretary of the Spanish Group

For all these reasons, it is vital to defend the democratic principles and values where they are vulnerable, in the same way that it is essential to fight without rest for the respect, dignity and the human rights of those parliamentarians democratically chosen by their citizens.

The huge challenges that our planet faces today: climate change, migrations, terrorism, the attacks against democracy, security, commerce, natural resources, sustainable development, human rights and so many others, are issues that we must all face together. The IPU deserves a tribute for the 130 years of sharing efforts for parliaments to work cooperatively, and we look forward to the IPU remaining a useful and indispensable organization for our world.



Contribution from Sri Lanka

The Parliament of Sri Lanka is one of the oldest legislatures in the world. While under colonial rule, a Legislative Council was established in 1833 as the first form of representative government in the country. With the introduction of universal adult franchise in 1931, a State Council was established in that year. Since independence in 1948, the Parliament of Sri Lanka has functioned without any interruption, with elections being held regularly.

In our modern world, the voice of the people reverberates with greater strength. The best institutions for those voices to be heard on a regular basis are our parliaments.

In this regard we must first recognize the foresight of the founders of the IPU which has, since its inception, provided a platform for the voice of the people through their representatives. The celebration of the IPU for 130 years of work is not only an occasion to pay tribute to its success, but an opportunity to map out a strategy as to how we parliamentarians can continue to listen to people's voices to serve them even better.

Over the years, the core values promoted by the IPU have expanded with the requirements of the times and often in tandem with the initiatives of the United Nations. In this context, nearly 180 parliaments are today involved with IPU in several projects for local capacity building, sharing of valuable experience, and most importantly in parliamentary diplomacy to promote understanding and harmony among people and nations and to achieve peace and prosperity, locally and globally. Engagements through parliamentary diplomacy, with the objective of boosting democracy, human rights, the rule of law and pluralism have facilitated these efforts. The Parliament of Sri Lanka has worked with the IPU and other partner nations to promote these objectives.

The Parliament of Sri Lanka takes pride in providing leadership for the implementation of the SDGs, with a Parliamentary Select Committee guiding implementation strategies.



In this anniversary year, the IPU can be justifiably proud that it has been able to assist all member countries, including Sri Lanka, to be even more efficient in democratic practice.

Since joining the IPU in 1980, Sri Lanka has been active in collaborating with the IPU, hosting several seminars and workshops: The South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in July 2018, and the Regional Meeting of Young Parliamentarians of the Asia-Pacific in April 2017, were both held in Colombo.

The Parliament of Sri Lanka takes pride in providing leadership for the implementation of the SDGs, with a Parliamentary Select Committee guiding implementation strategies. The Parliament has also taken a leading role in the Global Forum of Parliamentarians on development evaluation and has established a Parliamentary Caucus and a Select Committee for enhancing the national evaluation capacity for monitoring and evolving methods to improve efficiency, reduce waste and prevent corruption.

A policy of Open Parliament has been created to enhance citizen participation and their engagement in the parliamentary process. In addition, parliamentary committees are being opened to the media, enabling coverage of the activities of special and oversight committees. This has paved the way for enthusiastic public attention on critical governance issues.

Parliamentary diplomacy can be made an effective tool for addressing global issues of common concern such as climate change, migration, human rights, maritime security, combatting terrorism, eliminating cybercrime and drug trafficking. When promoting cooperation on such global concerns, bilateral and regional tensions can often become easier to navigate towards settlements. In all such efforts of the IPU, measures must be taken to mobilize the modern tools of the technology era. Sri Lanka is determined to remain a strong partner not only with the IPU but with all Member Parliaments, for our common good and prosperity.

Contribution from Sweden

The Swedish Delegation to the IPU would like to congratulate the organization on its 130th anniversary!

The United Nations Charter starts with the words: “We the peoples ...” and as parliamentarians we have a unique legitimacy to speak on behalf of the people as their elected representatives.

The Swedish Parliament has a proud tradition of international commitment. We have been working within the IPU for the past 127 years and our Parliament was also one of the very first to send members to attend the United Nations General Assembly. The Swedish Parliament today appoints a permanent delegation of five MPs to the IPU after every election, which should also represent the entire political spectrum in our country. We believe this continuity makes a difference.

Multilateralism is at the core of Swedish foreign policy and that is why it so crucial for us as Swedish MPs to also remain committed to international bodies, such as the United Nations, the IPU and the European Union. The Second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Dag Hammarskjöld, often emphasized the fact that it was the small nations that needed multilateralism and the United Nations for their protection and their future.

As Swedish parliamentarians, we strongly believe that democracy needs to be won over every day.

As parliamentarians, we are significant actors when it comes to challenges of central importance such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights and gender equality. We also need to recognize that many of these challenges have become problems without borders. Hence, both exchange and cooperation within the IPU with other parliamentarians are necessary to get new ideas, to develop the agenda and to contribute to progress.

As Swedish parliamentarians, we strongly believe that our strong commitment to multilateralism must translate from words into action. We are, hence, not only the largest donor to the IPU’s important programme work, but also the sixth largest donor to the United Nations system and one of a handful of countries that contribute at least 0.7 per cent of our GDI to official development assistance. However, we also believe this is essential if we are to hold international bodies accountable for delivering results.

Currently, we are celebrating one hundred years of democracy in Sweden. In 1918, the first decision was taken in our parliament to introduce universal and equal suffrage. As Swedish parliamentarians, we strongly believe that democracy needs to be won over every day.

The parliaments in the IPU are also critical when it comes to defending the rule of law, which is being increasingly challenged in many parts of the world, including on our own continent – Europe. As Swedish parliamentarians, we strongly believe that the pride of European cooperation after the Second World War has been to deal with conflicts through arbitration and courts rather than through armed conflict.

The aftermath of the Arab spring clearly demonstrated that a vibrant democracy requires more than merely organizing elections. The foundation of democracy is also made up of functioning institutions such as an independent judiciary, national bank and government agencies. However, at the centre of our national intuitions stand the national parliaments with their special responsibilities pertaining to approving the state budget and the oversight of the day-to-day business of elected governments.

We certainly hope that the IPU will remain at the centre when it comes to defending the core values of democracy and the rule of law at the global level. We trust that as long as individual citizens can replace their national leaders in elections, the chances for efforts to successfully maintain international peace and security around the world will dramatically increase.

To the IPU, we say: Stay strong; our world needs you more than ever before!



From left to right: Mr Mattias Karlsson, Ms Teres Lindberg (Deputy Chair of the delegation), Ms Cecilia Widegren (Chair of the delegation), Mr Olle Thorell, Ms Ulrika Heindoff.

Contribution from Switzerland

The IPU and Switzerland have shared a great tradition from the very beginning. Switzerland was active in the IPU from 1891 and recognized the Organization's importance at a very early stage. A member of the National Council from Berne called Albert Gobat (1843–1914) took the initiative to establish the IPU as a permanent organization with a secretariat and the name by which it is known today. Mr. Gobat took up the post of IPU Secretary General and was the Nobel laureate for peace in 1902. The destinies of Switzerland and the IPU were joined from then on.

The Swiss inter-parliamentary group is convinced that strengthening and developing the IPU as a vital platform for dialogue, and for fostering and sharing good parliamentary practices, will contribute to bolstering the protection of democracy in parliaments.

However, we had to wait until 1986 before the Federal Assembly took the step of establishing a Swiss inter parliamentary national group (Federal Decree, 19 December 1986). Made up of three members from the Council of States and five from the National Council, the newly created delegation allowed the Federal Assembly to ensure a regular presence and to engage for the long term in the Organization's work. The Swiss group joined the 104 other inter-parliamentary groups. Since then, Switzerland has never failed in its duty to take part in Assemblies, whether in Switzerland or abroad.

The Swiss inter-parliamentary group has always been committed to the Organization's missions and has continually been involved in the IPU's activities, whether on various committees, such as the Executive Committee, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and other high level groups, or the Standing Committees. The Swiss parliamentarians often speak with one voice at the centre of the world stage, even if there are different political positions within the delegation. As a neutral country, Switzerland is internationally recognized for its commitment to good parliamentary practices and the promotion of democracy.

The 130th anniversary is a chance to reflect on the IPU's position internationally. An organization matures over time, provided that it can adapt to worldwide challenges and is able to critique itself. It is important to highlight how seriously the IPU takes its strategy and how to implement it, where the intention is to act in a more targeted and relevant way. In that regard, Switzerland would like to see the IPU continuing to strengthen its position as a parliamentary platform and its role in promoting democracy. Parliamentary dialogue is a forum that complements the work of governments and enables many issues to be tackled from a new perspective.



The IPU plays a decisive role in defending human rights and advocating women's representation in parliament. It is the only international organization that has such a mandate and has proved itself through the specific support it gives to parliamentarians who are victims of violence. The Swiss inter-parliamentary group is convinced that strengthening and developing the IPU as a vital platform for dialogue, and for fostering and sharing good parliamentary practices, will contribute to bolstering the protection of democracy in parliaments.

Where there is a will, there is a way!



© The Swiss Parliament



Contribution from Syria

The IPU has worked over the past 130 years to provide the political framework for effective action to find peaceful solutions to global conflicts and threats. That was confirmed by the awarding of eight leaders of the IPU with the Nobel Peace Prize.

The IPU has made positive and constructive efforts in a wide variety of political, economic, social and environmental issues. It has sought to improve the lives and welfare of the citizens of the world and to protect the environment. In addition to this, the IPU has also worked to encourage democratic governance and activate institutions and values by working with parliaments and parliamentarians to respond to people's needs and aspirations. In addition, it works for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action in addition to linking parliaments with the activities of United Nations and its goals.

The People's Assembly in the Syrian Arab Republic is proud of its membership of the IPU and has a long parliamentary history. Parliamentary life in Syria was founded in 1919, and its current members represent many political parties and a number of independents, and 31 women have been directly elected – in Syria women MPs have never been appointed by quota.

Over the past decades, the People's Assembly has been keen to participate in the IPU's meetings, activities, seminars and workshops. Even during the past eight years of war the People's Assembly has continued to participate effectively and has not ceased to represent Syria in the most important forum for parliamentary diplomacy in the world.

During the years of the war, the Syrian people agreed a new constitution and approved it by a popular referendum; they adopted a modern election law under which multiple presidential elections took place in 2014, and the Syrians elected their representatives to the People's Assembly in two legislative roles in 2012 and 2016.

Even during the past eight years of war the People's Assembly has continued to participate effectively and has not ceased to represent Syria in the most important forum for parliamentary diplomacy in the world.

The IPU should share best practices among its Members, using the experiences of leading countries in various fields to confront the crises and successive difficulties that the world faces from the eruption of political, economic, climatic and humanitarian crises, and the increase of the phenomenon of extremism, racial and religious intolerance, violence and terrorism.

The IPU has always been a platform for thought, culture and respect for the law where its Members are obligated to respect the voters' trust and aspirations.

Here, we must continue to hold more meetings, workshops and events to activate the joint parliamentary work, and create more opportunities to exchange experiences and expertise between parliamentarians, cooperating with each other, researching solutions to many common problems facing the world, assisting developing countries and protecting the environment.

We look forward to the growing role of the IPU in changing the world through our cooperation to build societies that secure for citizens the well-being, freedom and equality. Moreover, we must devote the principle of international justice, solve outstanding problems peacefully, and respect the right of the people to self-determination.

In conclusion, we thank the IPU, and we hope that all our efforts will succeed for the good of the people that we represent.

© Attila Jandi / Shutterstock.com



Contribution from Thailand

The National Assembly of Thailand, in the celebration of the long and rich history of the IPU, takes pride in our involvement in this momentous milestone, a historic occasion highlighting 130 years of success and achievements of the IPU in bringing a parliamentary dimension to international affairs, and in the creation of a universal and dynamic global community of national parliaments in pursuit of the betterment of the world.

The IPU, as the world's oldest political multilateral organization, founded in 1889, has played an irreplaceable role in uniting parliaments to work towards balanced solutions to global issues. Since its inception, the IPU's tireless engagement with its Member Parliaments has laid a solid foundation for which a road of progress has been paved, leading us through a stunning series of successes, including women and youth empowerment, defending democracy and human rights, and championing rule-based multilateralism. Despite the formidable obstacles encountered, and whatever tribulations the times may have brought, the IPU has emerged in triumph with the continued retention of relevancy in international affairs today.

The National Assembly of Thailand became the first parliament in Southeast Asia to host an IPU Assembly, and was later chosen as venue for another two IPU Assemblies in 1987 and 2010.

Thailand has long acknowledged the IPU as the leading advocate for parliaments' meaningful roles in global governance, providing for parliamentarians the world over a source of inspiration and enlightenment to the realization of their full potential. Since 2015, the IPU has united and mobilized the whole community of the world's national parliaments around a global development agenda, in conformity with the principles of the United Nations, namely the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The IPU has given prominence to the key roles of parliaments in translating the global agenda into national realities, as well as enabling parliaments to deliver more effectively, and rise to a position of heightened significance in the twenty-first century.

The National Assembly of Thailand has exercised the 2019 chairmanship of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly to promote the SDGs by hosting a series of regional inter-parliamentary meetings under the theme of "Advancing Parliamentary Partnership for Sustainable Community", in parallel with the Government's ASEAN events. As the ASEAN coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation since 2016, Thailand continues to contribute to the complementarities of the SDGs and ASEAN Vision 2025 with Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), a holistic and bottom-up approach to sustainability, as initiated by His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, containing essential elements for ASEAN's development of a community that holds its people at its heart, with the promise of giving

every citizen the same opportunities, the same possibilities, and the same prospects.

To commemorate this remarkable event, the National Assembly of Thailand highlights its commitment to the IPU's enduring core values and fundamental principles, the establishment of which dates back to the first affiliation of the Parliament of Thailand to the IPU in 1950. In 1956, the National Assembly of Thailand became the first parliament in Southeast Asia to host an IPU Assembly, and was later chosen as venue for another two IPU Assemblies in 1987 and 2010. Many Thai Members of Parliament have had the privilege of being elected as prestigious IPU office-holders in various capacities.

In addition, we were among the first parliaments to endorse the “Common Principles for Support to Parliaments” in 2014.

To this day, the IPU continues to act as an inspiration for the National Assembly of Thailand, motivating further development of our legislative capacity to fulfil our commitments, and contribution to the strengthening of this long-standing partnership. Moving forward together, it is imperative that we reflect upon the agendas that remain unfulfilled, such as non-traditional security issues including violent extremism, and trans-national challenges such as migration, health, and climate change.

Let us contemplate the ways in which parliaments may continue to provide and deepen cooperation in the twenty-first century. Our efforts to streamline the core principles guided by the IPU into our key national agenda shall be intensified for the achievement of global peace, democracy, human rights, and sustainable development.

This historic anniversary reinforces our commitment to make the IPU a truly people-centred organization, and better its ability to confront and overcome the international challenges facing us. Beyond allowing a chance to reaffirm the IPU's timeless values and visions, this is an opportunity to build upon its past achievements and devise a future plan of action to ensure the stronger dedication of the IPU, and to invigorate its Member parliaments to become fully effective, accountable, and inclusive. The National Assembly of Thailand looks forward to working closely with the IPU in order to contribute to its future endeavours, to write a new chapter of success, and to benefit all the people across the world.

© National Assembly of Thailand



Contribution from Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste has been a Member of the IPU since the early days of independence and it continues to support our ongoing efforts to strengthen our capacity and promote democratic values by making the National Parliament more open, transparent, effective and close to the citizens. In 2018 the National Parliament of Timor-Leste signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen our capacity, which is a clear sign of trust in the ability of the IPU to assist us in our development. We also appreciate the support we are given to, for example, establish a G7+ Parliamentary Assembly, which will be one of the main objectives of the National Parliament for the coming years.

The commitment of the Timorese people to a democratic system began much earlier than 2002, the year of our independence. The democratic dream has been forged through 24 years of occupation, where the Timorese people showed resilience and conviction.

Fernando Pessoa, the Portuguese poet, said: "All nations are mysteries. Each one is the whole world alone." Our nation is no exception, as the evolution of our democratic process demonstrates.

*"All nations are mysteries.
Each one is the whole
world alone."*

To continue the roadmap to development, however, we need benchmarks; we need friends that can help us find the right way and share best practices with us. The IPU is one of those friends. Neutral, impartial and an organization on which we can rely, the IPU not only serves as a repository of international

best practices, but facilitates the connection with other parliaments, fostering and promoting important political dialogue.

The IPU works with many organizations and institutions at the inter-governmental level, including the United Nations, an organization with which it cooperates and with which it has permanent observer status. We see the IPU continuing to enhance the relationship between citizens and parliaments in the future.

The existence of a parliament is not synonymous with democracy, although democracy cannot exist without a parliament. Parliaments provide a link between the concerns of the people and those that govern. The existence of a public forum to articulate citizens' concerns is a prerequisite for the legitimacy of government and of a democratic system. We all believe that the will of the people should be the basis of the authority of government.

To trust democracy, citizens must believe that democracy is the regime that best represents them and best ensures their quality of life. Corruption and lack of clarity in democratic discourse in the long run ultimately condemn democracy as a system.

Therefore, the IPU should continue to mobilize us to develop best practices that we can implement in our countries in order to make parliaments more open and transparent and, ultimately, closer to the people.

© National Parliament of Timor-Leste



Contribution from Turkey

What began in 1889 as a small group of parliamentarians, dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue, has since grown to an organization that has 179 Member parliaments, representing billions of citizens, organizing two general sessions and dozens of other events every year. Since its foundation in 1889, the IPU has contributed immensely to democracy, multilateralism, equality, human rights, rule of law and sustainable development through promoting socially and politically inclusive, representative, open, transparent, accessible and accountable parliaments.

Today, democracy, which is at the heart of all the work of the IPU, is increasingly threatened by a new set of challenges like climate change, economic instability, emerging conflicts, rising populism, growing xenophobia, Islamophobia and other forms of hate and discrimination. In this changing world, the IPU's role in building and protecting global democracy is becoming more crucial. In this sense, the IPU has to be more influential and effective. We should strengthen the IPU's conflict prevention, peacebuilding and reconciliation capacity. With 179 Member Parliaments and 13 Associate Members, the IPU is in a unique position to promote inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation. This exceptional feature of the IPU makes its role in tackling emerging challenges against our democracies all the more important.

In this changing world, the IPU's role in building and protecting global democracy is becoming more crucial.

To sustain the IPU's essential work in the upcoming years, all parliaments need to step up their involvement in the IPU's efforts. They should encourage fellow parliamentarians all around the world to actively participate and contribute to IPU events and promote the IPU agenda in their countries. The IPU on the other hand, as an inclusive organization, should take into consideration that, in this changing world, a one-size fits all approach to democracy does not always deliver the desired results.

The IPU has always been one of the most important parliamentary diplomacy platforms for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The Turkish Delegation to the IPU has been an active participant in IPU events and has contributed to IPU efforts whenever needed. In line with the IPU's "promoting inclusive and representative parliaments" efforts, Turkey is constantly working on increasing the number of young and women parliamentarians. After the last parliamentary election in June 2018, the number of female MPs was 104 out of 600. The ratio of female MPs has increased to 17.4 per cent from 14.7 per cent of the previous legislative term. The women in parliament represent 48 provinces in Turkey.

© Grand National Assembly of Turkey

Another important milestone in achieving a more inclusive parliament has been the constitutional amendment in 2017 that decreased the minimum age for eligibility from 25 to 18. The election in 2018 was the first time in Turkish history that candidates at the age of 18 contested the elections. After that election, the current parliament had 141 young members of parliament. With increased women and young parliamentarians, members from nine different political parties and independent MPs, the current composition of the parliament is truly representative and inclusive. All these developments reflect the will and commitment of the Turkish people to promote gender equality, inclusiveness and representativeness. In this regard, Turkey will always continue to work in coordination with the IPU.

130 years after its creation, the IPU still provides a unique global space for parliamentary diplomacy by empowering MPs, evolving trade with sustainable development, promoting human rights and gender equality, peace and security, encouraging the young, and bringing opposing sides around the same table. We fully support the IPU in its work and efforts based on democracy, multilateralism, equality, sustainable development, human rights and rule of law.

From left to right: Ms. Katharina LUMPP United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Representative in Turkey, Ms. Ravza KAVAKCI KAN, Head of Turkish IPU Delegation, Mr Mustafa SENTOP, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ms Gabriela Cuevas BARRON, IPU President.



Contribution from **Turkey**

Contribution from Turkmenistan

We, the Members of one of the largest and oldest organizations in the world, celebrate the 130th anniversary of the establishment of the IPU, whose goal is to establish peace and the rule of law through parliamentary diplomacy.

Today, parliamentary diplomacy plays an important role in bringing nations and states closer together and promoting the ideas of international peace and development. Inter-parliamentary relations contribute to an understanding of the political structure of various countries, their economy, culture, customs, traditions, achievements in various fields, the exchange of positive experiences including legislative work, and most importantly, the strengthening of an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding between people and states. Therefore, we attach great importance to the work of the IPU.

The IPU works closely with the United Nations, sharing its goals and objectives. Representatives of the IPU participate in the major events of United Nation bodies, including through the Human Rights Committee.

Thanks to the effective work in the IPU, bilateral relations between the Mejlis of Turkmenistan and the parliaments of the world have been established and strengthened.

Turkmenistan's foreign policy is based on the country's neutral status, twice recognized by United Nations Member States. All state authorities, as well as the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, actively interact and expand the scope of cooperation with the United Nations and its structures. In the framework of this cooperation, various measures are being taken to clarify international and national legislation among all sectors of the population, as well as projects to support childhood, motherhood and gender equality.

In our opinion, this form of cooperation is effective in terms of implementing the SDGs at the national level, and we believe that the positive experience gained by our Parliament can be shared with the national parliaments of the world.

We are clearly aware of the role of parliamentarians in consolidating efforts to achieve universal consensus and sustainable development at national and international levels. Article six of the Basic Law of Turkmenistan states that state power in Turkmenistan is based on the principle of separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial, which act independently, balancing each other.

Our country attaches the most serious importance to international parliamentary cooperation both bilaterally and multilaterally. We consider inter-parliamentary relations as an important

component of national foreign policy aimed at establishing international peace and harmony. In this regard, we consider it appropriate to introduce the practice of developing and adopting model laws, which will bring the approaches of all countries closer to the main issues on the agenda of the IPU. In our opinion, this would become a real contribution to the achievement of universal consensus on some critical issues of our time, bringing national legislations of the participating countries to a single level that meets the requirements and standards of international law.

We also believe that the IPU should make issues of cybersecurity, protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens, intellectual property, and protection of databases one of the fundamental issues of its future activity.

The Mejlis of Turkmenistan became an official member of the IPU in 2017, and today is an active and responsible participant, whose efforts have been praised by parliamentarians in the Central Asian region and around the world. Thanks to the effective work in the IPU, bilateral relations between the Mejlis of Turkmenistan and the parliaments of the world have been established and strengthened.

We would like the IPU to be authoritative, strong, democratic and impartial, maintaining and strengthening its authority as an authoritative body for the consolidation of the efforts of all parliaments towards the ideals of peace and progress.

Contribution from the United Arab Emirates

The Federal National Council (FNC) has a distinguished partnership with the IPU which this year celebrates its 130th anniversary. Since the FNC joined the IPU during the 64th Assembly in Sofia in 1977, the FNC has succeeded in building an excellent relationship with the IPU, one of the oldest parliamentary unions in the world.

We believe that institutional cooperation is at the core of our vision for the future relationship with the IPU. In 2014, the FNC and the IPU signed an Agreement on Technical Cooperation and Partnership; the first in the world to be signed by the IPU with a parliament since its inception. The agreement provides a platform for strengthening parliamentary cooperation and partnership at the regional and international levels through five main areas: Arabization of the website of the IPU, regional parliamentary cooperation, programmes to support gender equality, quality standards of the secretariats of parliaments, and financial support for the IPU.

In 2014, the FNC and the IPU signed an Agreement on Technical Cooperation and Partnership; the first in the world to be signed by the IPU with a parliament since its inception.

The FNC has played an effective role in the IPU's assemblies and committees through submitting proposals and emergency items that have been welcomed and acknowledged by representatives of international parliaments. In addition, FNC Members have held several posts in the IPU, including the representation of the Arab Group in the Executive Committee from 2008 to 2015. We believe that our membership in the Executive Committee has contributed effectively to the drafting of the IPU

2012–2017 Strategy, and it is worth mentioning that the FNC strategy launched in 2016 is aligned with the IPU strategy.

The FNC has contributed to parliamentary efforts to combat terrorism and extremism. Dr. Amal Abdullah Al-Qubaisi, the former Speaker of the FNC, has chaired the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism since its establishment. The Group has contributed significantly to the success and to the achievement of the goals of the IPU in relation to combatting terrorism and to the IPU's relationship with the United Nations through the first joint programme of its kind and by the signature of the trilateral Cooperation Agreement between the IPU and the United Nations Offices of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime. The FNC also hosted the second meeting of the Group in Abu Dhabi in 2018 where an intensive action plan was been adopted.



© FNC

The FNC also proposed in 2010 the establishment of the Young Parliamentarians Forum and chaired it since its inception until 2016. This Forum was one of the most important proposals made by the FNC to encourage the participation of young parliamentarians as we believe in the importance of youth empowerment.

The FNC hosted the first Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in Abu Dhabi in 2016 in the presence of more than 30 women speakers of parliament from around the world. The summit, entitled “United for Shaping the Future for a Better World,” concluded with the issuance and adoption of the Abu Dhabi Declaration. The Abu Dhabi Declaration affirms the commitment to the realization of the United Nations 2030 SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the results of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Marrakech and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

It also fulfills many of the FNC’s ambitions, especially towards the creation of strategies, executive action plans, proposals and mechanisms to support and advance important issues such as women and youth empowerment, and towards promoting the values of tolerance that the UAE highly believes in and wishes to disseminate and promote globally.

The FNC, in its role to develop a better parliamentary practice, has worked on the establishment of its parliamentary strategy, the first of its kind in the Arab world, and has set strategic objectives and goals for the years 2016–2020. Moreover, it has established a permanent future committee that aims to implement the important recommendations of the Abu Dhabi Declaration and to address the future challenges and opportunities.

Upcoming FNC elections will mark a milestone for women’s empowerment as the UAE President’s decree has called for Emirati women to hold 50 per cent of FNC seats. This historic step is a first of its kind in the Arab world. We hope that this step will represent a benchmark for parliaments around the world.

The FNC is seeking to strengthen its partnership with the IPU through signing a new partnership agreement during the 141st Assembly in Serbia. The agreement is based on our desire to build on the successful partnership and to strengthen cooperation with the joint programmes, which support the global parliamentary work and IPU Strategy.

The alignment of the FNC’s strategic objectives with the IPU strategy allows the FNC, through the implementation of its own strategic initiatives, to support IPU’s strategy. The FNC is proud of this exceptional strategic partnership with the IPU.

© FNC



Contribution from Ukraine

The IPU is a worldwide cooperation platform for peace and interaction of parliamentarians from 179 countries. In this respect and for the solid establishment of representative institutions we should further enhance our work on development of multilateralism and cooperation for peace. The IPU should preserve its role as a unique platform for discussions on countering global challenges, peace and security, as well as the protection of human rights around the world.

Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play as citizens' representatives in building democratic, free, open and safe societies.

The parliamentary delegation of Ukraine attaches great importance to the activities and work agenda of the Organization. In recent years it has been actively involved in the IPU's decisions and providing the IPU with its vision of the issues concerned.

The role of parliaments at the national level in the promotion and protection of human rights can be greatly enhanced through their active and proactive engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the United Nations Human Rights Council, its universal periodic review mechanism and special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies.

The implementation of the United Nations Human Rights Council's recommendations at the national level, specifically those involving the need for legislation changes, should require utmost attention of the parliamentarians around the world.

Support for multilateralism is based on a rules-based model of the international community, and on the belief in cooperation based on shared values. We should urge on effective multilateralism mechanisms and better alignment of regional organizations in advancing peace processes and security stability in the world.

Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Conference on Disarmament, and the centenary of the League of Nations, we believe the IPU should further make consistent efforts to contribute to maintaining international peace and security.

Parliamentarians should play an important role in implementing international commitments, including those found in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals, particularly the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and providing access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

For this reason, we should boost the participation of women parliamentarians and young parliamentarians in the decision-making process and openness of state bodies, including parliaments.

In this respect, on 19–20 May 2017 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine hosted and organized the Global Legislative Openness Conference in cooperation with the Open Government Partnership's Legislative Openness Working Group. Also, with UNDP assistance, the Ukrainian Parliament launched the web platform Open Parliament for Ukrainian citizens.

It is worth mentioning the deepening of the cooperation between the IPU and the World Trade Organization, which should lead to the creation of new incentives and strengthening of existing ones in order to secure and facilitate trade liberalization in the world. Ukraine, as a World Trade Organization member, is strongly supportive of the multilateral trading system and reaffirms the principles and objectives set out in the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization and the centrality of the rules-based multilateral trading system.

The parliamentary delegation of Ukraine attaches great importance to the activities and work agenda of the Organization. In recent years it has been actively involved in the IPU's decisions and providing the IPU with its vision of the issues concerned.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is committed to implementing the IPU's decisions and resolutions to ensure its compliance with the best international practices, as well as to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with its partners, including under the auspices of the IPU.

© Andrii Nesterenko



Contribution from the United Kingdom

The British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) is the official national group representing the United Kingdom's parliamentarians in the IPU. Our membership comprises all sitting members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords across all political parties and the cross-benches of the Palace of Westminster. Comprised of more than 1400 parliamentarians, we represent one of the largest legislatures in the IPU.

The BGIPU is very proud to have been one of the two original national groups of the IPU under the leadership of Sir William Randal Cremer MP, who founded the organisation with his French counterpart, Frédéric Passy in 1889. Rewarding this role, Randal Cremer MP became the first British recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1903. Delegations drawn from the UK Parliament have attended every IPU membership conference since its inception and have hosted six Statutory Assemblies (1890, 1906, 1930, 1957, 1975 and 1989) including the landmark centenary event for the IPU which was opened by Queen Elizabeth II. UK parliamentarians have also held the IPU Presidency on four occasions (1912-1922, 1947-1957, 1976-1979 and 1991-1994).

Through the years, the IPU has evolved and adapted to new challenges and events, remaining relevant to the world as a focal point for concerted parliamentary dialogue and cooperation. In its promotion of stronger democratic principles and institutions and in defence of human rights, the IPU has also worked to develop important standards and norms, disseminating vital guidance on good parliamentary practices and lessons learned by other parliamentary counterparts. This work has served to build parliamentary capacity and efficacy in addressing a wide range of issues of great value to many parliaments, contributing to the spread of democratic ideas and steady growth of democratic countries throughout the later years of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

The IPU has also sought to ensure parliamentary voices are heard across the international relations agenda, particularly with regards to achievement of the SDGs, and also ensuring parliamentary contributions on key global mechanisms to address refugee and migration issues, bringing parliamentary perspectives to global economic policies in the World Trade Organization and at other global economic institutions. In what is now perhaps its biggest challenge, the IPU has been playing an active role to encourage increased awareness of, and lead towards concerted inter-parliamentary action to address the climate emergency facing our planet.

We remain keen to see the main activities of the IPU focused closely on facilitating meaningful exchanges and dialogue between parliamentarians across the world to increase mutual understanding and avoid clashes over differences or disagreements.

Uniquely, one of the IPU's most important roles is to monitor and defend the human rights of members of parliament worldwide, calling violations and cases of abuse to account in many different political contexts. This role is accompanied by a broader remit to promote respect for universal human rights values, norms and principles. To that end, the IPU also works in support of gender equality and to advance the full participation of women, young people, minorities and indigenous peoples in political and public life which is vital in a world where difference too often still leads to disadvantage.

The IPU has a key role to play in direct engagement between parliamentarians and other politicians and, just as in 1889 when dialogue was the key objective pursued by Cremer and Passy, the importance of building bridges and lowering barriers between our countries remains as relevant and necessary today as ever before. The IPU is a global organization that stands for fundamental values: promoting democracy and universal human rights; advancing good governance; respecting the rule of law and ensuring accountability. It should continue to work to advance the case for representative governance worldwide, underscoring the fundamental principle that all the world's citizens should have a voice in who governs them and how they are governed.

We remain keen to see the main activities of the IPU focused closely on facilitating meaningful exchanges and dialogue between parliamentarians across the world to increase mutual understanding and avoid clashes over differences or disagreements. To this extent, BGIPU sees the core task of the IPU being little changed from its founding vision. Nevertheless, it is a purpose which remains as vital as ever before and where the IPU is uniquely placed given its history, standing and universality to continue to play its role for many decades into the future.

© Roger Harris



Contribution from Uruguay

The Parliament of Uruguay has been a Member of the IPU since the 1930s, with an interruption during the break-up of the institutional order, reaffiliating in 1985. Due to its strong commitment with the IPU, the Parliament of Uruguay hosted the 84th IPU Conference in Punta del Este in 1990, and set up the Permanent IPU Inter-Parliamentary Group of Uruguay; being composed of eight permanent members belonging proportionally to the political parties with the greatest representation in our Parliament. The President of the Uruguay Group is the President of the General Assembly and of the Senate, and the co-President is the President of the House of Representatives, rotating the latter every year.

The Parliament of Uruguay attaches great importance to parliamentary diplomacy, taking advantage of the IPU Assemblies to strengthen ties with other parliaments and also to build new ones.

Since joining the IPU, and more particularly after the return to democracy in 1985, the Parliament of Uruguay has over the years actively participated in the work of the IPU, with representatives in the IPU Vice-Presidency, the Executive Committee and the Presidency of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians; a Uruguayan woman MP being the first Latin American parliamentarian to hold that position. Uruguay has also held the Presidency of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians; Bureaux of all Permanent Committees of the IPU, the Presidency of the Third Permanent Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and the Vice-Presidency of the Second Permanent Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade. For many years our Parliament has been a Member of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO; had an Auditor in the internal audit of the IPU accounts for 2011, and had a co-rapporteur in numerous draft resolutions, most recently on missing persons and cyberwar.

The great effort to give better visibility to the IPU in our country was achieved in 2010, by the goodwill of the highest authority of our Parliament, the President of the General Assembly, finally being able to reach a balance in the participants of both Chambers.

The Parliament of Uruguay attaches great importance to parliamentary diplomacy, taking advantage of the IPU Assemblies to strengthen ties with other parliaments and also to build new ones. This has been a factor of undoubted success in the knowledge of the activities of the IPU by the media and the public on positive actions in this regard. This type of parliamentary diplomacy activity is desirable in each IPU Member Parliament.

It is recommended that Member Parliaments take full advantage of the initiatives undertaken by the IPU, for example, International Democracy Day and the promotion of the 2030 Agenda with the SDGs at its core. If these initiatives are taken with skill, we can involve civil society in these activities. It must be borne in mind that parliamentary activity is not popular in most countries and these actions give an excellent example of community activity and responsibility.

At the beginning of each Legislature our Parliament requests training workshops on the operation of the Parliament in international affairs. To this purpose, it avails itself of all the documentation published by the IPU, which is also used and distributed to new parliamentarians. The IPU bibliography is considered of importance for the region and is printed to serve as a reference to our MPs.

The commitment of the Parliament of Uruguay to the IPU is such that since 2000 it has put its human and material resources at the service of the purposes and tasks of the IPU through the Secretariat of the Latin America and the Caribbean Geopolitical Group, serving as the focal point of the IPU for the region.

We are well aware that, in global terms, the IPU is a small organization and needs a great additional effort to make society conscious of its important activities for the benefit of democracy building, and that is the responsibility of all parliamentarians.

© Fuente: Departamento de Fotografía del Parlamento del Uruguay



Contribution from Viet Nam

We are living in a complex, unpredictable and fast evolving world, faced with numerous emerging security challenges, traditional and non-traditional, which threaten peace, security and prosperity. The IPU, a global forum with 179 Member Parliaments and 13 Associate Members, needs to strengthen the spirit of solidarity, reform itself to become more responsive, transparent, effective, efficient and responsible to assume its increasingly important role in the international political life.

All the IPU's decisions and programmes need to stem from the reality of life, reflecting the people's wishes and aspirations over the world. The IPU needs to actively engage more in international issues, serving as a bridge to address disputes and disagreements among countries through peaceful means, in accordance with the principles of equality among countries, respect for international law, national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Moreover, the IPU should further promote its universal membership strategy to admit more parliaments, especially welcoming former founding Members such as the US Congress to join the IPU.

Viet Nam attaches great importance to maintaining political stability, economic development; implementing human rights, rights to freedom and democracy of citizens.

The IPU is shaped by fundamental common values which are democracy, representation, equality and the rule of law. Inheriting and promoting good experiences gained over 130 years of operation, the IPU should continue to review and adjust regulations and operation rules; promote, support and strengthen the capacity of Member Parliaments and help Member Parliaments to perform their functions well. A strong and influential IPU is based on the strength of its Members. Parliaments may also share their best practices or any distinguishing features that make their parliament more respectful, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

In recent years, the role of Viet Nam's National Assembly has been increasingly improved. Legislative and supervisory activities of the National Assembly have been regularly reformed for efficiency, transparency, publicity and more accessibility. Hence, the National Assembly of Viet Nam has obtained important achievements, creating the legal basis for the comprehensive reform process of the country, promoting further international economic integration with the focus on the rule of law as well as building a state of the people, by the people and for the people. Viet Nam attaches great importance to maintaining political stability, economic development; implementing human rights, rights to freedom and democracy of citizens.

© Viet Nam National Assembly



Over the years, the number of legal documents passed by the National Assembly has increased with higher quality and broader scopes which cover every area of social life. In law-making process, the National Assembly has conducted different activities such as field trips, consultation with experts and opinion collection from across the country. The National Assembly has actively reached the people through the expansion of information and press, propaganda and live broadcast meeting sessions of the National Assembly and its agencies. The publicity of draft laws on mass media has provided the people, organizations and enterprises about changes in policies and laws so that all sectors can contribute to the completion of domestic laws, policies and regulations. This reflects the close connection between the National Assembly and the people in the law-making process to increase the transparency of the National Assembly's work.

The National Assembly of Viet Nam pays special attention to promoting openness and transparency in the National Assembly's activities, aiming to build an e-Parliament to enable deputies to interact with the people more easily and facilitate two-way information between the National Assembly and people quickly and promptly.

The National Assembly has reformed in its hearings, question and answer activities, upholding the spirit of construction, democracy and openness. The sessions of the National Assembly have become the political events of the country, attracting the attention of the majority of constituents nationwide.

In addition, the National Assembly has also conducted a vote of confidence in the form of a secret ballot regarding positions elected or approved by the National Assembly. This is one of the important forms of assessment and supervision to make the deputies, the Government, ministries and agencies accountable for the performance of functions and duties.



Contribution from Viet Nam

Contribution from Yemen

First of all, we would like to thank the IPU for its role in supporting Member Parliaments and for strengthening its position to play a contributing role in promoting sustainable development, human rights, education and democracy.

We, in Yemen, are experiencing difficult and exceptional circumstances. The Parliament has a pivotal role after the coup against the legitimate government by the Houthi militias, which made the control of Parliament, and disruption of its effectiveness and performance, their first target after the invasion of the Yemeni capital Sana'a in 2014.

The improvement of the functions of the IPU and its future goals must take into account the crises that have plagued the Middle East, sweeping it away from democracy, and leading to the emergence of sect leaders and warlords.

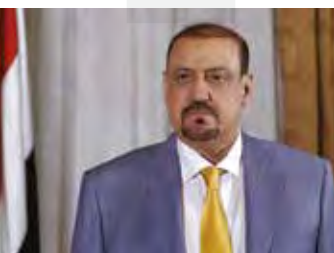
Therefore, the Yemeni Parliament needs the support of the IPU in order to carry out the heavy tasks entrusted to it and resume its work despite the challenging circumstances and crises, after convening its first session since the coup, in the city of Sayoun-Hadramout and the election of a new presidium.

The process of strengthening the democratic approach in Yemen and the values of freedom, equality, human rights, and promoting sustainable development remains a supreme goal for which the Yemeni Parliament is struggling, but it still lacks the basic needs that the IPU has supported since it was founded more than a century ago. Hence, this requires deepening cooperation and partnership with the IPU.

The IPU should give greater attention to the transfer of expertise to parliaments in developing countries by providing technical support, training and workshops, transferring the successful experiences of other parliaments, raising awareness among parliaments of pressing issues and enhancing their performance to increase their capacity to respond and interact with various issues of international concern.

The improvement of the functions of the IPU and its future goals must take into account the crises that have plagued the Middle East, sweeping it away from democracy, and leading to the emergence of sect leaders and warlords. This will not be possible unless the IPU keeps up with these changes, so that its work becomes permanent rather than seasonal, shifts from the reaction to these crises to action, and establishes committees and tools that can move in all countries according to their needs and specificities

© H.E. Sultan Saeed Albarikani - Speaker of the Yemeni Parliament



The phenomenon of incitement to hatred and racism is one of the most serious challenges facing our world today. The IPU will have to put this threat at the forefront of its objectives through a three-tracked strategy. The first track is to support and encourage dialogue between religions and civilizations; the second is to establish dialogue with world media, as this phenomenon is mostly fueled by the media, which has been deliberately or unintentionally acting to incite hatred, racism, and phobia through their coverage of certain incidents and issues, threatening coexistence in the world; the third track should focus on encouraging national parliaments to enact laws preventing the advocacy of hate and intolerance by media.

© Shutterstock.com

Contribution from Zimbabwe

The motto of the IPU, “For Democracy. For Everyone” sums up what differentiates the IPU from other national, regional and continental parliamentary organizations. As a proponent of democracy, the IPU is defined by its unwavering commitment to the advancement, promotion and protection of peace and democracy through parliamentary processes. As the largest global parliamentary organization, the IPU stands for the rights of everyone regardless of religion, race, geographic location, gender or creed. Its work is thus reinforced by a resolve to promote democratic governance, facilitate the establishment of democratic institutions and advance democratic values.

This is predicated on its vision of a world where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development and a world where every voice counts.

In the face of increased global conflicts and challenges, there should be increased cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations to find lasting solutions to current global challenges.

Underpinning the work of the IPU is the idea that a strong parliament is a vital sign of a healthy democracy. To that end, the IPU is inspired by a commitment to strengthen parliamentary institutions, dissipate executive dominance and ensure that parliaments protect and promote human rights, world peace, gender equality, youth empowerment and sustainable development.

In the face of increased global conflicts and challenges, there should be increased cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations to find lasting solutions to current global challenges, including climate change, poverty, gender inequality and civil and political strife. While the strides that have been made through the convening of Parliamentary Hearings at the United Nations are commendable, the IPU should strive for a more than an observer status at the United Nation General Assembly. In the same vein, the lobbying missions to non-members should be accelerated so that all bona-fide national parliaments become IPU Members. To that an extent, the IPU could increase the visibility of its activities among national parliaments.

The IPU should also play a more prominent role in capacitating Members of Parliament through convening workshops on critical developmental issues at national, regional and international levels on issues, including the SDGs.

The IPU should also actively pursue mutually beneficial synergies with regional and continental parliamentary bodies such as the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the East African Legislative Assembly, the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament. This will ensure that the issues on these bodies' agendas are transmitted to the IPU, thus rendering the IPU truly global in its parliamentary thrust and focus.

The Parliament of Zimbabwe is committed to advancing greater public involvement in its legislative and other parliamentary processes. Pursuant to this, all the 60 Bills that were passed during the Zimbabwe Eighth Parliament were subjected to public hearings and input from citizens. In fact, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Bill was withdrawn by the Executive following a huge outcry arising from the public hearings. This attests to the maturity of Zimbabwe's democracy and the growing influence of participatory democracy.

The Parliament of Zimbabwe has strategies to enhance public involvement in its processes. The Speaker of the National Assembly conducts quarterly outreach programmes to tertiary institutions in all the country's provinces. The outreach programmes, which seek to explain the role of parliament, have resulted, among other things, in the drafting of model laws by tertiary institutions which have influenced Bills brought before Parliament by the Executive. This engagement has also resulted in the translation of the country's Constitution into vernacular languages by five of the country's universities. The Parliament of Zimbabwe remains committed to advancing pluralistic and participatory democracy and, in so doing, amplifying the voice of the people whose interests it represents.

© Parliament of Zimbabwe





Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

T +41 22 919 41 50

F +41 22 919 41 60

E postbox@ipu.org

Chemin du Pommier 5

Case postale 330

1218 Le Grand-Saconnex

Geneva – Switzerland

Follow us on **ipu.org** and

