



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Item 8

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9 February 2018

Amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules

COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE IPU BY THE SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

9 February 2018
Ref: PARL4/1

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Greetings from Fiji.

I make reference to the documents pertaining to the amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules, and hereby provide comments to the proposed amendments to Articles 2, 19, 26 and 28 respectively.

Proposed Amendment to Article 2 Paragraph 2¹

~~2. The official languages of the Organization are English, French, Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese.~~

Comment:

Presently, the Inter-Parliamentary Union ('IPU') works with its Member Parliaments and Associate Members in two official languages specifically English and French. Over the years, the IPU debates, discussions, reports, draft resolutions, summary records of the meetings and other documents in English and French have demonstrated to be acceptable and working flawlessly. It can be agreed that the member parliaments and associate members have not encountered any difficulties in having meetings and producing reports, draft resolutions, minutes of meeting and other documents in English and French.

Rule 37.1 in the IPU Statutes and Rules clearly states that "The IPU Secretariat shall receive all documents, reports and draft resolutions and distribute them, together with the summary records of the sittings, in English and French. It shall ensure the simultaneous interpretation of the debates in these two languages, as well as in Arabic and Spanish". This is a clear indication that interpretations in Arabic and Spanish are mandatory therefore restricting the need to make other languages official.

¹ The text highlighted in grey represents the proposed sub-amendments.

The concept of having other official languages such as Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese will evidently incur additional costs for the IPU. Extra funding will be required to accommodate the need of having other official languages. This will therefore result in the increase in the subscriptions paid by the members and associate members.

Since the IPU is financed primarily by its Members and Associate Members out of public funds and voluntary donor funding, these funds can be better utilised in areas where necessary in order for IPU to realise its full potential and meet the increasing demands for assistance.

Given that there appears to be no concrete objective for having other official languages being introduced in the IPU as the prevailing official languages are working efficiently, I hereby submit that the Organization maintain the status quo. The proposed amendment is not supported and should not be accommodated.

Proposed Amendment to Article 19 bis Paragraph 2 (functions of the President)

~~2. In the absence of the President, the Executive Committee shall decide to whom these functions shall be conferred among the six Vice-Presidents representing each of the geopolitical groups.~~

Comment:

With respect to the proposed amendment in paragraph 2, it is not supported and should not be accommodated.

I hereby submit that in case of the absence of the President of the IPU, the Secretary General shall be the most suitable person to represent the President in the execution of his or her representative functions. The Secretary General currently plays a critical role in defining and implementing the strategic direction to building democracy and therefore when acting in the capacity of the President to perform such other functions as would be entrusted upon him or her, there will be minimal disruption to the overall work of the Organization.

Additionally, the Secretary General shall be the most suitable person for the role as he or she has worked alongside with the President and is fully conversant with the responsibilities that have been entrusted upon him or her. These responsibilities may include but not be limited to directing activities, chairing full meetings and acting as the representative at global events and gatherings.

Proposed Amendment to Article 26 Paragraph 2 Subparagraph (i) (functions of the Executive Committee)

- (i) Approve every ~~three~~ five years the Organization's policies on transparency and accountability aligned with the Triennial Strategy of the IPU. The Executive Committee shall submit an annual report to the Governing Council on this subject with specific recommendations for action;**

Comment:

The proposed amendment to "approve every three years..." is not supported and I hereby submit that this is amended to "five years" instead.

Five years gives ample time for successful implementation of the Organization's policy on transparency and accountability to deliver sufficient and results-based outcomes. Five years provides adequate time in establishing engagements with key stakeholders and develops that communication channel to allow for constructive dialogue and exchanges on policies. These exchanges may result in changes to how policies are implemented, hence, three years is too short of a time to address these changes and fully implement the policies.

Overly ambitious timeframes are among the most common difficulties in implementation. Time pressures can leave too little time to address factors for success, such as different options for policy delivery, consultation with implementers and stakeholders, or resource requirements and constraints. This can result in substantial adjustments between resource estimates for the policy to be implemented and the resources that actually have to be deployed to deliver the policy successfully.

Tight timeframes place even greater importance on review and monitoring activities to ensure that practical problems do not reduce the anticipated policy outcomes. It is not uncommon for timeframe difficulties to arise after the policy decision and during implementation simply because an overly optimistic view about practical implementation aspects was taken during policy development. The risk, in these cases, is that decisions are made on the run, possibly with reduced transparency and accountability. A disciplined approach to implementation issues is particularly important when time pressures exist.

Therefore, five years is an adequate consideration of the timeframe needed for the Organization's policy to be implemented and deliver results-based outcomes.

Proposed Amendment to Article 28 Paragraph 2 Subparagraph (k) (functions of the Secretariat)

~~(h)~~(k) ~~Under the direction of the President, follow up on the~~ Maintain ~~Maintain~~ relations between the IPU and other international organizations and, in general, its representation at international conferences;

Comment:

With respect to this proposed amendment, the current practice is that the Secretariat is appointed by the Governing Council and therefore I submit that it continues to operate and function at the same level and report to the Governing Council. It is essential to maintain relations between the IPU and other international organizations and, in general, its representation at international conferences.

Following up on relations between the IPU and other international organizations could be something that does not need much consultations with the authoritative figures of the IPU. Having to get directions from the President on such matters would impede on the expeditious process already in place. Relations management is something that should not be burdened by having too much bureaucracy.

Additionally, the Secretariat is more than highly capable of addressing such matters and this has been portrayed positively.

Furthermore, the words "follow up" in line 1, is out of place. Relations management is not something that is followed up on because it is overdue but rather it is a sensitive matter that needs to be maintained.

The above are a few notable comments for consideration and at this juncture, I thank you for the continued support to the Fijian Parliament and I wish you well in the preparations for the upcoming 138th Assembly of the IPU.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni
Speaker
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji