



Inter-Parliamentary Union

# The IPU 3-Year Communications Strategy: 2019-2021

**For approval**

---

Version 4: September/October 2018



# 1. Introduction

This 2019-2021 communications strategy is designed as an umbrella framework for IPU communications to ensure that we communicate in a strategic and targeted way. It is closely aligned with the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021. Our objective is to produce a member-driven communications strategy that reinforces the IPU's positioning as a unique resource for parliamentary data, diplomacy and development. The strategy builds on existing foundations such as a recent visual identity refresh, an enhanced social media presence and a revamped website.

2018 is a transition year as we consult with the IPU's members and stakeholders to ensure that the communications strategy addresses their needs. The strategy is designed over three years allowing for some overlap and flexibility between years. Sections 1-7 cover the general elements of the communications strategy including messaging, audiences, principles, channels and key moments. In Sections 8-11 we focus on specific sub-strategies for web and digital platforms; social media; public relations and media; and publications. In Sections 12 and 13, the strategy concludes with a note on budget, resources and process. Below are a few highlights from the strategy:



## → 2018 TRANSITION YEAR: *Back to basics*

Our main focus in 2018 is to get back to basics, build on existing foundations, and make the IPU's communications function fully fit for purpose. This includes stabilizing human and financial resources; refreshing existing communication products or creating new ones based on priority business needs; structuring and rationalizing systems and processes; and investing in our mailing lists to ensure we reach the right people. For example, the new European data protection act that came into force in May 2018 was a good opportunity to purge the IPU's mailing lists. Although this has led to a smaller data base, we now have a more targeted list of genuinely interested people who are more likely to amplify our themes.

Other notable actions in 2018 include: enhancing our social media presence by ensuring a more active presence on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube; refreshing the e-Bulletin; reaching out to parliaments' own communication services; creating fact sheets for the IPU's programmes; celebrating the first edition of the International Day of Parliamentarism; finishing the first round of development improvements for [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org); and supporting the launch of the open data platform.

## → YEAR 1: *Upping the game*

In the first year of the communications strategy, 2019, we plan to bring in the members more by creating spaces to highlight the work they are doing. The 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IPU on 30 June, coinciding with the International Day of Parliamentarism, will be a good opportunity to do this (see [Section 7](#)).

A big project in 2019 will be a second wave of developments for the website. Improvements will include simplifying the site's architecture, segmenting the content according to our audiences, and making design changes. We also plan to boost our social media presence significantly by investing in paid promotions to reach potential new followers and draw more people to our website.

This year will be the opportunity to look more closely at our editorial strategy and evaluate what publications have the best return on investment.

## → YEARS 2 AND 3: *Consolidating and sustaining*

By 2020-2021, our main communication tools and channels should be in place. In years two and three of the communications strategy we will look at other more tactical tools such as an app or an intranet, as well as continuing to expand our social media presence, and implementing a basic customer relationship management system.

## 2. Objectives

Our ultimate objective is to promote parliaments as the core institution of democracy.

This means going beyond simply informing people of what the IPU and its members do. **Informing** is just the first step. We will go further by **persuading, engaging, converting**, and finally by **encouraging people to act** to strengthen parliamentary democracy.

## 3. Overall communications principles

Below are seven guiding principles that we will apply for IPU communications:

- **Serving members**  
IPU communications will be inclusive and continue to bring in its members as much as possible to show the relevance of parliaments. By members, we mean national parliaments and MPs from all over the world. People engage better with people than with abstract issues.
- **Less is more**  
The IPU will communicate less, but more strategically. We will concentrate our communications on the big ticket items (see timeline in [Section 7](#)).
- **Do more with limited resources**  
With few resources, we have to be inventive and creative; for example, by using social media more to relay our messages, finding synergies with strategically-chosen partners, or “piggy-backing” existing outreach campaigns.
- **Keeping a sharp parliamentary focus**  
IPU communications should always contain a parliamentary angle and not be diluted by broader issues. The IPU’s role is to show that parliaments are part of the solution to the problems facing the world.
- **Showing impact**  
Wherever possible, we will highlight the impact of the IPU’s actions; for example, new laws passed following IPU resolutions or initiatives; more women and young people in parliament; stronger parliaments thanks to IPU interventions etc.
- **Less self-promotion**  
We will focus more on the issues and the members and less on the IPU itself; moving away from being an *advertiser* to reinforcing our positioning as a primary *resource* on parliaments.
- **Results-based communication**  
We will support the organization’s goals and focus on SMART results using key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure and guide our communications. Where data is available, we will benchmark our results against peer organizations.

## 4. The IPU “Message House”

### Vision

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

### Mission

The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments.

We promote democratic governance, institutions and values, working with parliaments and parliamentarians to articulate and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. We work for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.

### IPU Strategic objectives

#### BUILD STRONG, DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTS

► **KEY MESSAGE:** The IPU is a one-stop-shop for parliamentary data and good practice, drawn from its 130 years of experience and 46,000 members.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** The IPU pools the collective expertise of its members into standards, toolkits and guidelines to help parliaments develop into better democratic institutions.

#### ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY AND RESPECT FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS

► **KEY MESSAGE:** Women represent only 24% of MPs. The IPU has been promoting women in politics since the 1970s.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** Thanks to IPU support, many parliaments have increased their % of women MPs. When Saudi Arabia joined the IPU 15 years ago, there were no women in parliament. Now 20% of the parliament is female.

#### PROTECT AND PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

► **KEY MESSAGE:** The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians is one of the only international mechanisms with a remit to defend MPs who are abused or harassed.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** The Committee has a long track record of helping hundreds of MPs. It is currently defending the cases of over 500 MPs from 37 countries.

#### CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE BUILDING, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND SECURITY

► **KEY MESSAGE:** The IPU was founded to prevent conflict through parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy. It acts as an ‘honest broker’.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** The IPU brings opposing sides around the table; for example, East and West during the Cold War, Israel and Palestine, North and South Korea, Greek and Turkish Cypriots...

#### PROMOTE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

► **KEY MESSAGE:** The IPU is the only global organization of parliaments. Its membership comprises nearly all of the world’s national and supranational parliaments.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** The IPU has 130 years of convening power. Twice a year, it brings together over 1,400 delegates to its world assemblies.

#### PROMOTE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

► **KEY MESSAGE:** 51% of the world’s population is under 30; but young people under 30 only make up 2% of the world’s MPs. The IPU advocates for more youth participation in politics.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** Thanks to IPU support, more young people are entering politics. MP Raphael Igbokwe, a former member of the IPU’s Forum of Young Parliamentarians, was the main sponsor of the recent *Not too Young to Run bill* that passed in Nigeria.

#### MOBILIZE PARLIAMENTS AROUND THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

► **KEY MESSAGE:** The IPU raises awareness of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by training and equipping parliaments with the tools to help them implement the global goals.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** Through its regional seminars on the global goals, the IPU has mobilized almost half of the world’s parliaments to take action on, for example, climate change and better health for all.

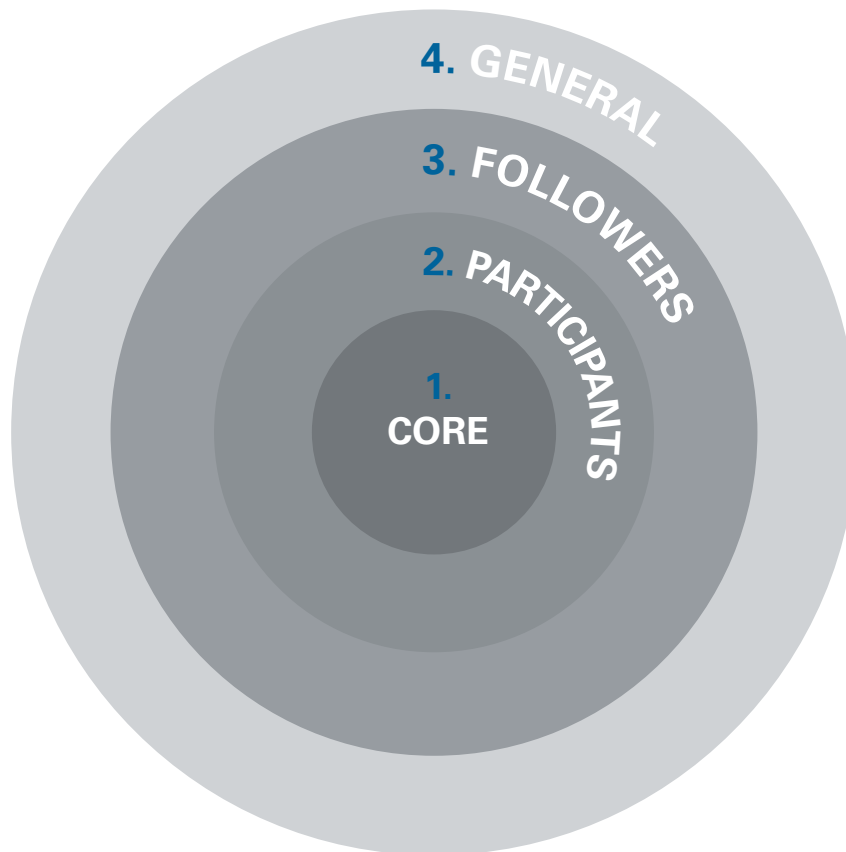
#### BRIDGE THE DEMOCRACY GAP IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

► **KEY MESSAGE:** The IPU brings people back into the process by helping parliaments turn global commitments into local realities.

**EXAMPLE OF A PROOF POINT:** On climate change, the IPU helped mobilize national parliaments to ratify the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement. To this date, 180 countries out 197 have ratified the agreement convention.

## 5. Target audiences

The IPU's main audiences are mapped out below in overlapping circles of engagement and amplification.



- 1. CORE:** IPU political leadership and governance bodies; IPU groups in national parliaments including speakers, MPs, secretaries general and staff; and the IPU Secretariat.  
This audience is devoted to the IPU's objectives and values and acts on their behalf on a daily basis.
  - **High amplification**
- 2. PARTICIPANTS:** The international parliamentary community, the UN, partner organizations and associate members, the international development community, donors, and strategic partners.  
This audience actively participates in IPU activities by, for example, attending IPU events regularly or co-branding research papers. The groups support IPU values and objectives and are willing to make significant contributions either financially or time-wise. They are willing to speak, write or advocate on behalf of the IPU and the values we promote.
  - **Medium to high amplification**
- 3. FOLLOWERS:** Politicians generally, policy-makers, researchers, engaged citizens.  
This audience engages with the IPU either through social media or by opting in to IPU communications and publications. They are interested in IPU values and objectives. We want them to amplify more, particularly when it comes to policy changes, or changing laws in their country. They also act as a barometer of the public mood.
  - **Low to medium amplification**
- 4. GENERAL:** The media, influencers, students, general public.  
These audiences engage more rarely with the IPU but they are interested in its values and objectives. With targeted communications, we can encourage them to act more, particularly in areas such as women, youth, human rights violations, as well as supporting a parliamentary national implementation angle to the 2030 global goals.
  - **Low amplification**

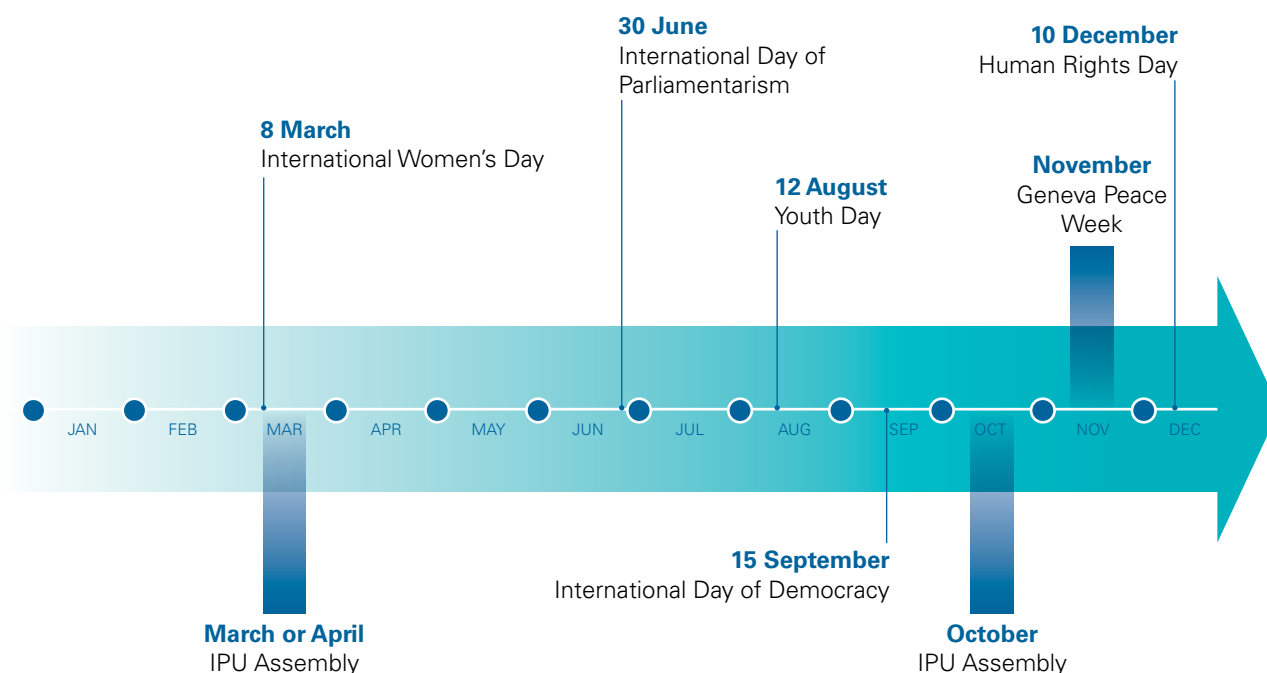
## 6. Channels and products

Below is a breakdown of our audiences with some of the channels and IPU products that they are primarily interested in. The list below is not exhaustive and there is overlap between the columns.

Audiences	Channels	Examples of IPU products they are interested in
<b>1. CORE</b>	Social media, website, media coverage, direct email, postal mail...	IPU in the news, IPU on social media, Annual Report, e-Bulletin, open data platform, key publications...
<b>2. PARTICIPANTS</b>	Social media, website, media coverage, direct email, postal mail, assembly app...	Web announcements, e-Bulletin, open data platform, key publications, fact sheets...
<b>3. FOLLOWERS</b>	Social media, website, media coverage, direct email...	Web news stories, e-Bulletin, open data platform, key publications, videos and infographics...
<b>4. GENERAL</b>	Social media, website, media coverage...	Press releases, open data platform, key publications, videos and infographics...

## 7. Key communication moments during the year

Below are the eight key communication moments during the year. They also correspond to the eight IPU strategic objectives in the IPU's 2017-2021 Strategy.



### Focus: Celebrating the IPU's 130<sup>th</sup> birthday

2019 is not only the IPU's 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary; it is also the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's membership to the IPU, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary for South Africa, the 30<sup>th</sup> for Ethiopia etc. The point is that the anniversary should not just be about the IPU. It's an anniversary for all parliaments. 2019 is an opportunity to show the world why it needs parliaments more than ever before, particularly in a time of disconnect between democratic institutions and the people. With this principle in mind, our communications strategy for the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be to offer parliaments a menu of tools, content, products and dates to choose from so they may tailor celebrations to their local context. From International Women's Day on 8 March to Human Rights Day on 10 December, parliaments will be able to pick and choose what and when they celebrate. We will also draw on our archives to showcase some key moments in the IPU's rich history.

## 8. Web and digital platforms strategy

### → 2018: TRANSITION YEAR

Our overall web strategy is to continue developing and improving [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org). We are coming to the end of a current cycle of improvements in which the website has been completely rehailed in the last few years. The results are encouraging, with strong growth in traffic and pages viewed. This year, we will concentrate on launching the open data platform, as well as integrating an organization-wide online registration system for events in time for the 140<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Doha.

Another focus this year will be to better segment the news section according to the different types of information and interested audiences. For example:

- *Press releases* for the media (Audience 4. General) will be reserved for the key moments noted above in Section 7 and for news events where the IPU has something to say.
- Most items will fall into the category of *news stories* in which we showcase the issues at stake, the impact of IPU work, and bring in more the voices of our members (Audience 3. Followers).
- *Announcements* will be saved for events or more official business of the IPU (Audiences 2. Participants and 1. Core).

We will continue to refresh and promote the IPU e-Bulletin as the main tool that pushes out content from the website and encourages audiences to engage with us.

### → YEAR 1

Using analytical data, we are building a better picture of the sections and the content that get the most traffic. This will help us in the second phase of developments for the website planned for 2019. These will include measures to make the website more user-friendly, interactive, segmented according to audiences, and with more space dedicated to members either as password-protected sections (extranet) or public blog spaces.

We will examine how to bring in content in Spanish and Arabic onto the website.

We will also look at how to develop our search engine optimization and ensure the IPU web content is ranked as high as possible. According to recent data, 43% of web traffic is driven by search rankings.<sup>1</sup>

### → YEARS 2 AND 3

By 2020-2021, the website should be confirmed an indispensable source of information and debate on parliamentary democracy.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.marketingprofs.com/chirp/2017/32671/13-statistics-that-prove-the-value-of-seo-infographic>

## 9. Social media strategy

### → 2018: TRANSITION YEAR

Our strategy in 2018 is made up of five main drivers:

- Consolidating the good progress made on Twitter, enhancing our presence on Facebook, promoting our new Instagram account, and reorganizing the IPU YouTube channel. This means closing fake accounts and consolidating multiple accounts; for example, accounts set up for International Day of Democracy, will be merged in order to concentrate on one single centralized account per platform.
- Posting as much content as possible to grow the base and build up the community while focusing on parliamentary issues. As well as pushing out content from our website, we will use social media to highlight our member activities, focus on MPs with a particular story to tell, showcase member best practices, and retweet interesting media coverage.
- Producing more videos and infographics to highlight the issues that we promote through IPU programmes. We will cast members and staff. Video and infographics usually get the most traction on social media.
- Encouraging more amplification by producing social media kits for leadership, core and participant audiences, including ready-made tweets, pictures, cards, and messaging.
- Joining or creating the conversation with dedicated hashtags for IPU issues or events; for example, #IPU130, linking up with existing threads; for example, #WomenMPs, or activity around international days where we can bring in the parliamentary angle; for example #WorldParliamentDay on 30 June.

### → YEAR 1

In 2019, we will shift strategic gears by posting less content but in a more targeted way. This is to get more engagement through retweets, likes, comments etc.

We also plan to put in place paid promotion to increase our visibility on social media. Other organizations have had successful experiences with this strategy that we will try to emulate. For example, the ICRC gained 1,2 million new followers in just one year as a result of paid promotion on Twitter.

This year will be the opportunity to activate our presence on other social media platforms, for example, LinkedIn.

### → YEARS 2 AND 3

By 2020-2021, the IPU should have reached a critical mass of social media presence; our audiences should start growing exponentially, allowing us to amplify and multiply our messaging to a wider public.



# 10. Public relations and media strategy

## → 2018: TRANSITION YEAR

Although we have no dedicated staff member for public relations and media outreach, this is a vital component of the communications strategy as emphasized by many stakeholders after consultations. As a result, the Director of Communications will handle this area directly as well as bring in extra resources when necessary for flagship publications or during key moments of the year.

The main focus in 2018 will be to build relations with important media contacts; for example, the UN correspondents in Geneva and New York, as well as journalists interested in specific areas of IPU work; for example, women, human rights, peace and security etc. We will also invest in software to have access to regularly updated lists of media contacts.

## → YEAR 1

Journalists and news desks receive thousands of press releases daily. As a result, our media approach will be targeted. Rather than send out blanket press releases to mass media, we will adopt a more targeted approach for key moments or publications, or for a particular regional focus. A press release will only be sent if there is something truly new or newsworthy, otherwise we lose credibility with the media. We will prioritize news agencies such as AFP, AP and Reuters, and follow up the press release with targeted personal contact.

We will join forces with member parliament communication teams wherever possible to amplify and multiply our messaging at key moments.

In 2019, we will carry on developing our media relations by building partnerships for content placement. These partnerships will help us place opinion pieces (Open Editorials) or thought leadership pieces in selected media outlets. The opinion pieces, signed by IPU leadership, members or key stakeholders, will help advocate for our positions and influence Audience 4. (General)

The second round of web development mentioned above will also involve a clearer segmentation of content dedicated to journalists and media.

## → YEARS 2 AND 3

By 2020-2021, depending on available resources, we may consider organizing press trips to showcase the impact of IPU activities, for example, capacity-building activities or missions to lobby for MPs' human rights.

# 11. Publications strategy

## → 2018: TRANSITION YEAR

The IPU has a rich collection of publications with premium content covering its main work areas. However, with demands coming in from different stakeholders, it is sometimes not clear what the purpose of the publication is, who is the intended audience, and what is the return on investment. We currently have an eclectic collection of reports, summaries of reports, handbooks, compilations from handbooks, issues briefs, fact sheets... some collections are 'one-offs'; others have multiple titles. Some are co-branded with other organizations, some have photos and tables, others are purely text. Formats and design vary from one publication to another. All publications are translated into French. Some publications have multiple translations that are difficult for the Communications Division to quality control due to a lack of resources.

The IPU could benefit from a more robust editorial strategy to reinforce its branding and the stamp of quality that an IPU publication should represent.

As a result, in 2018, we will begin work to structure and better 'market' the IPU's growing list of publications in order to clarify the raison d'être and audience for each collection. After a few years of existence, it will also be time to refresh the IPU's branding.

We will also try and ascertain which publications have had the most success and why, based on quantitative data such as downloads from the website, and qualitative feedback based on surveys.

## → YEAR 1

In 2019, we will introduce the differentiated branding for the IPU collections, which will allow the reader to understand better who they are for and what they are meant to do, as well as reinforce our positioning as a quality and unique provider of information about parliaments.

Following overwhelming feedback from members, we will also consider how to reduce the amount of hard paper copies and explore digital options for some products.

## → YEARS 2 AND 3

We will continue supporting, consolidating and sustaining IPU editorial content to ensure that it has the most impact.

# 12. Budget and resources

The IPU Communications Division is made up of a headcount of three people + one person in charge of IT.

Currently one position is filled by a consultant. It is expected to be filled permanently by the end of 2018. The Division can also draw on some consultant help notably on specific web projects, media relations and graphic design.

The communications annual operational budget is approximately CHF 250,000 but we can draw on resources from other divisions, notably Programmes. In 2019, we will benefit from extra resources to help put in place the communications strategy, notably for the web and digital platforms.

## 13. Conclusion

This strategy is being elaborated through extensive consultations to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible and that it meets the needs of the IPU's stakeholders and members.

The timelines for the development of this strategy are scheduled as below:

- March 2018: Survey on communications at the 138<sup>th</sup> Assembly.
- May-August 2018: Consultations with key stakeholders including internal staff, the Executive Committee, and selected members.
- September: Finalization of the strategy.
- October: Publication after the 139<sup>th</sup> Assembly.







Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

+41 22 919 41 50  
+41 22 919 41 60  
postbox@ipu.org

Chemin du Pommier 5  
Case postale 330  
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex  
Geneva – Switzerland  
[www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)