



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

CL/202/SR.1
28 May 2018

Summary records of the Governing Council

202nd session

25 and 28 March 2018

Geneva (Centre international de Conférences Genève).

AGENDA

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First sitting

Sunday, 25 March 2018

The meeting was called to order at 9.20 a.m., with Ms. G. Cuevas (Mexico), President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in the Chair.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(CL/202/A.1 and A.2)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 201st SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

(CL/201/SR.1)

The summary records of the 201st session of the Governing Council were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

PROPOSALS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 138th ASSEMBLY

The President, recalling the established practice of nominating the IPU President to preside over IPU Assemblies taking place in Geneva, where there was no host Parliament, said she took it that the Council would wish her to serve as President of the 138th Assembly.

It was so agreed.

Item 4 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

- (a) On her activities since the 201st session of the Governing Council**
(CL/202/4(a)-R.1)

The President, after providing an overview of the activities she had conducted since the previous session of the Governing Council with the aid of a slide presentation, said that those activities were fully described in her report on the subject (CL/202/4(a)-R.1).

- (b) On the activities of the Executive Committee**

The President said that most of the subjects addressed by the Executive Committee during its two days of intense and productive discussions in Geneva would be reported on under the relevant items of the agenda. She added that, in reviewing the special situation in Venezuela, the Committee had been informed that the Venezuelan Parliament had partially settled its arrears. The Parliament was therefore eligible to participate with full voting rights in the present Assembly and had announced a delegation that fully reflected its political spectrum and was also gender-balanced. With respect to the special situation in Yemen, the Committee had welcomed the willingness of the Yemeni Parliament, following consultations between the IPU and the country's two parliamentary factions, to send a unified delegation to the current Assembly that would speak with one voice. It had therefore decided to unfreeze the participation of Yemen in the IPU, including with a view to promoting further dialogue between those two factions.

Concerning the proposed amendments and sub-amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules and the responses thereto, the Committee had decided after a lengthy discussion to recommend that the Council adopt the amendments aimed at enhancing youth participation in the IPU. In addition to being a source of great pride and satisfaction for her as a young woman parliamentarian, that decision was a victory for the IPU in its role as a pioneer in the area of youth empowerment. She urged all delegations to include young parliamentarians in their delegations to IPU Assemblies.

As to her own proposals and those submitted by the Russian Federation, the Committee had broadly supported the vision they encompassed for strengthening the IPU and agreed that additional time was needed to consider their substance and implications. It had thus requested its Vice-President, Mr. Kosachev, to pursue consultations for the purpose of preparing, within the statutory deadline, a new set of amendments for consideration at the next Assembly in October 2018. The current proposals had accordingly been withdrawn and Members were invited to provide input to the consultations. The Committee was scheduled to complete its work on the penultimate day of the Assembly and she would therefore deliver a further report on its activities at the next sitting of the Council.

The Governing Council took note of the report of the President.

Item 5 of the agenda

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE
ACTIVITIES OF THE IPU IN 2017**

The Secretary General, after summarizing with the aid of a slide presentation the activities carried out by the IPU in 2017, said that those activities were fully described in the *Annual Report 2017* available for downloading via the IPU website at <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2018-03/annual-report-activities-inter-parliamentary-union-2017>. In relation to action on health-related goals, he reiterated the recent appeal launched by the IPU, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), for Members to urge their Governments to ratify the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products and thus ensure that the fortieth instrument of ratification required for its entry into force was deposited before July 2018. He called on participants to circulate the *Annual Report 2017* to their fellow parliamentarians in the interest of promoting appropriate support for the work of the IPU.

The Governing Council took note of the annual report of the Secretary General.

Item 6 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2017 AND FINANCIAL SITUATION

(CL/202/6-R.1, R.1-Add and R.2)

Mr. R. del Picchia (France), a member of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, presenting the financial results for 2017 set out in document CL/202/6-R.1, said that the healthy operating surplus of some CHF 560,000 was primarily attributable to the increase in revenue from assessed contributions. Staff expenditure had also been reduced, however, in that new vacancies had remained unfilled and existing staff had assumed the resulting additional workload without any financial remuneration. In addition, fewer temporary staff had been hired owing to the fact that the two Assemblies held in 2017 had been hosted outside Geneva. Moreover, the Russian Federation had effectively made an additional contribution to the IPU budget by having generously borne the additional costs associated with the 137th Assembly in St. Petersburg that would otherwise normally have fallen to the IPU on account of it taking place in Geneva.

By contrast, some CHF 83,000 had been lost in foreign exchange transactions owing to the weakening of the Swiss franc against the US dollar. Doubtful accounts had furthermore tripled since 2015 to CHF 154,000 and current arrears in contributions stood at CHF 812,000, signalling that action was needed to halt such trends. Concerning IPU staff, the Sub-Committee had noted that women continued to outnumber men and had also suggested that consideration be given to

the breakdown of staff by nationality. From the reserve of around CHF 427,000 set aside for repairs to the IPU Headquarters, some CHF 220,000 was to be spent in 2018 on the replacement of windows. The recruitment of consultants required to ensure implementation of the IPU Strategy had also incurred substantial costs but had the benefit of reducing the demands placed on permanent staff and eliminating the need to recruit additional staff members.

In conclusion, he drew attention to the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2018 (CL/202/6-R.2), in which it was stated that the audit opinion given by the External Auditors had been positive in every aspect. Further welcoming the fact that the IPU management had acted on all the recommendations made in recent years by the External Auditor, he said that the Sub-Committee recommended that the Council approve the financial administration of the IPU for 2017.

The President expressed gratitude to all those who had worked to achieve such positive results and called on all Members not having yet done so to pay their assessed contributions without delay.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden), Internal Auditor, presenting his report, said that he had carefully examined the financial report and audited financial statements set out in document CL/202/6-R.1 and welcomed the positive opinion expressed therein by the External Auditor concerning the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the IPU as at 31 December 2017 and their compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). He noted that the IPU would in future record donor funding as income once a pledge was formalized and urged the presidents of the geopolitical groups to encourage the timely payment of assessed contributions, suggesting in addition that Members might wish to follow the Swedish example of making voluntary contributions to the core budget of the IPU to assist the implementation of its many activities. Believing that the reported financial results for 2017 provided a true and fair reflection of the current financial situation of the IPU, he shared the Sub-Committee's view that the Council should approve the financial administration of the IPU for 2017.

The Secretary General, providing an update on the mobilization of voluntary funding, said that the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency had extended its substantial funding arrangement with the IPU to the end of 2018, with the possibility of a further renewal thereafter. The Japanese not-for-profit organization Worldwide Support for Development also continued to fulfil its commitment to provide US\$ 3 million over a five-year period in support of IPU activities in the areas of democracy, youth empowerment and gender equality, notably in the Asian region. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development was likewise continuing, to the end of 2018, its support to the tune of US\$ 1.5 million for programme implementation. Irish Aid was furthermore set to join UNWomen in providing support for the IPU's gender equality-related activities, which were similarly supported by the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates in addition to its ongoing support for development of the IPU website.

United Nations agencies, including UNDP and WHO, continued to provide support for country-level programmes. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) provided support for promoting the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), concerning the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among non-State actors. For its part, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) had provided a grant of CHF 200,000 for health-related activities, for which the Government of Angola had also contributed CHF 200,000. The Governments of China, Equatorial Guinea and Micronesia had furthermore contributed, respectively, CHF 1.5 million for capacity-building in support of sustainable development in developing countries, CHF 400,000 for activities relating to health and gender equality, and CHF 100,000 for work relating to migration and refugees.

As to support in kind, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea had for over a decade been seconding staff to the IPU in order to assist primarily with research and the National People's Congress of China had recently expressed an interest in following that example. The seconded staff had for their part benefited by learning about the functioning of a multilateral organization such as the IPU, where interns from research institutes and think tanks, such as the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva also gained valuable professional experience.

The President, welcoming the positive reports of the External and Internal Auditors attesting to the financial health of the IPU, said that the IPU Secretariat must be encouraged to continue ensuring that its accounts remained transparent and accessible, including by posting them on the IPU website.

Mr. M. Thambi Durai (India) asked what efforts were being made to recover unpaid contributions.

The Secretary General said that the Executive Committee considered the case of each parliament in arrears in the light of its specific situation with a view to encouraging such parliaments to honour their commitments as IPU Members and to avoiding the imposition of sanctions, including suspension. As Members did not always appreciate the need for timely payment of their assessed contributions, however, the presidents of the geopolitical groups had been requested to exert their influence as robustly as possible on their membership in order to stem the rising trend of unpaid contributions.

Mr. A. Jasem Ahmad (United Arab Emirates) asked how the IPU High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism was to be funded and also about support provided to parliaments with limited resources or in financial difficulty, especially in Africa.

Ms. D. Solórzano (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her Parliament was in arrears through no fault of its own, as the Venezuelan Government had assumed control of its financial resources. She therefore appealed to the IPU not only to urge the Government to relinquish that control but also to protect the rights of the country's elected parliamentarians, who had remained without pay for the past two years.

The Secretary General took the Chair with the President temporarily absent from the room.

A delegate from Iraq said that, despite the financial difficulties created by the situations of conflict and terrorism in Iraq, his Parliament had recently determined that its outstanding dues to the IPU would be settled at the earliest possible opportunity. He therefore hoped that his country would no longer feature in the table of unpaid contributions.

The Secretary General, acting for the President, welcomed that confirmation of forthcoming settlement, and said that the table of unpaid contributions was constantly updated in the light of payments received. Concerning the situation in Venezuela, he recalled that the Executive Committee had decided to permit the Venezuelan delegation to participate in the current Assembly with full voting rights. The IPU's hope was that the Venezuelan authorities would respond favourably to its request for the release of funds to settle the Parliament's unpaid contributions.

With respect to the High-Level Advisory Group, he said that some of its members and indeed various parliaments had expressed an interest in funding its activities and that the exact requirements on that score would be identified once the Group's budget and work plan were finalized. In the interim, the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates, which presided over the Group, had generously contributed the sum of CHF 100,000 as seed money for the related preparatory work.

As to the IPU support provided to parliaments in crisis, particularly in developing countries, the IPU's capacity-building assistance to many such countries in Africa, among others, was detailed in the logframe report contained in document CL/202/6-R.1-Add. In that context, the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund established two years previously in order to promote the participation of resource-challenged parliaments in IPU activities had thus far assisted the Parliament of Vanuatu, which had consequently become a full-fledged Member of the IPU. No further requests for assistance from the Fund had been received.

The President of the IPU resumed the Chair.

The Governing Council approved the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU for 2017.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

The Secretary General announced that, in accordance with Rule 34.2 of the Rules of the Governing Council, the quorum of 73 was established for the 202nd session on the basis of the participation of 145 Members or substitutes in the current first meeting of the Council.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 28 March

The meeting was called to order at 9.45 a.m., with Ms. G. Cuevas (Mexico), President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in the Chair.

Item 7 of the agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(a) Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference
(CL/202/7(a)-R.1)

The President delivered the report contained in document CL/202/7(a)-R.1 on the one-day parliamentary meeting held in November 2017, in Bonn, on the occasion of the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

(b) International Conference on Promoting better regional cooperation towards smart and humane migration across the Mediterranean
(CL/202/7(b)-R.1)

Mr. A. Muscat (Malta), reporting on the two-day international conference held in November 2017, in Valetta, as described in document CL/202/7(b)-R.1, said that the conference had provided the opportunity for participants to exchange good practices in the management of migration across the Mediterranean and explore avenues for a harmonized response. The resulting observations, conclusions and recommendations were set out in the annex to the document.

(c) Fourth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians
(CL/202/7(c)-R.1)

Mr. K. Abdullah (Kuwait) delivered the report contained in document CL/202/7(c)-R.1 on the Fourth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, which had taken place in Ottawa over two days in November 2017.

(d) Annual session of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization
(CL/202/7(d)-R.1)

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden), reporting on the two-day annual session of the Parliamentary Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), held in December 2017 in Buenos Aires and detailed in document CL/202/7(d)-R.1, said that trade was an engine of development and that the event had thus grown in importance over the years. As representatives committed to the protection and promotion of well-being, parliamentarians must take up the challenges facing global trade and ensure that its benefits reached as many as possible, including by contributing to the work of the WTO Parliamentary Conference.

(e) Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations
(CL/202/7(e)-R.1)

The President delivered the report contained in document CL/202/7(e)-R.1 on the two-day annual Parliamentary Hearing held in February 2018 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, which had focused on the emerging global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Noting that the IPU had frequently addressed issues relating to migration and was again doing so at the current Assembly, she said that the Hearing had provided an opportunity for networking with senior United Nations officials and demonstrated the relevance of the IPU. It had also underlined the benefits of strengthening IPU cooperation with the United Nations in the interest of pursuing a shared agenda on vital issues.

(f) Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women
(CL/202/7(f)-R.1)

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), reporting on the one-day parliamentary event held in March 2018 on the occasion of the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, said that the constructive debate had centred on the theme *Parliaments deliver for rural women and girls*. In outlining the salient points of that debate, as set out in document CL/202/7(f)-R.1, she emphasized the need to repeal discriminatory laws and engage men in all efforts aimed at promoting the rights and empowerment of rural women and girls.

The Governing Council took note of the reports on recent IPU specialized meetings.

Item 11 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(b) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians
(CL/202/11(b)-R.1, R.2, P.1 and P.2)

Ms. D. Solórzano (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, reporting on the activities of the Committee at its recent session in Geneva, said that the Committee had held 12 hearings and informal meetings with official delegations participating in the 138th Assembly and complainants, all of whom she thanked. Those important interviews had helped the Committee to better understand the cases before it and to express its concerns, exchange views and foster a constructive dialogue in order to arrive at satisfactory solutions in accordance with national and international human rights standards. Its meeting with the IPU President had also enabled it to explain its work, as well as examine ways of enhancing the implementation of its recommendations and address recurring thematic issues of interest to the IPU as a whole.

During the current session, the Committee had examined 18 cases relating to the situation of 248 parliamentarians from 12 countries. Of the parliamentarians whose cases had been examined, 44 per cent were in Asia, 25 per cent in the Americas, 23 per cent in Europe, 6 per cent in Africa and 2 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa region. Of that total, 98 per cent belonged to the opposition and 22 per cent were women. Turning to the draft decisions relating to those cases, she pointed out that their format had been changed for the sake of clarity and that cases not mentioned would continue to be examined.

Cambodia

The situation in Cambodia had continued to worsen in recent months, with the Cambodian authorities refusing any dialogue and pursuing their repressive approach. They had decided not to participate in the current Assembly in protest at what they considered to be interference in their internal affairs and repeatedly affirmed their respect for the principles of parliamentary democracy, pluralism and human rights. All opposition parliamentarians were in exile and Mr. Kem Sokha, held incommunicado and no doubt in failing health, had still not been tried. The IPU had furthermore been refused permission to visit him in detention. The country's only opposition party had also been dissolved and the authorities claimed that the opposition was planning a coup, albeit that their evidence confirmed that it merely sought to win the next elections and obtain a democratic alternation of power. All members of the Cambodian National Rescue Party had been expelled from politics for five years, had had their parliamentary mandates revoked and had been reassigned, without election, to political parties close to the majority party. Consequently, there were no serious competitors to the party in power, which was thus guaranteed to remain after the elections in July 2018 and which had also obtained all seats in the Senate elections held following the dissolution of the opposition party.

Appalled by that situation, the Committee expressed serious doubts with respect to the conduct of credible, free, fair and transparent elections in July 2018 and the integrity and legitimacy of the Cambodian Parliament. It urged the Cambodian authorities to reinstate all opposition parliamentarians, resume the political dialogue and allow the opposition to participate freely in the elections. It also urged IPU Members to continue actively relaying its concerns about the situation and to do their utmost to ensure that they were addressed by the Cambodian authorities.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of 57 Cambodian parliamentarians.

Maldives

In the Maldives, there was currently major political unrest. The President had refused to implement a decision of the Supreme Court ordering the release of nine parliamentarians and the reinstatement of 12 others and had declared a state of emergency. In the light of those developments, a delegation mandated by the Committee had visited the country the previous week to discuss the worrying situation of opposition parliamentarians. It was deeply concerned by the persistent political instability in the Maldives, considering that the causes must be addressed in order to prevent further tensions in the run-up to the presidential election in September 2018 and the parliamentary elections in March 2019. Further believing that the mandates of the 12 parliamentarians having joined the opposition from the main ruling party had been arbitrarily revoked, it called on the Maldives authorities to allow those parliamentarians to serve in parliament at the earliest opportunity. It also called on them to ensure that the numerous opposition parliamentarians arrested under the state of emergency were guaranteed their right to a fair trial. The delegation was additionally concerned that the Parliament did not fully respect the Constitution in the conduct of its work and that the ruling parties and the opposition appeared unable to use the parliamentary platform to state their views and find joint solutions. It thus called on all parties to engage in a constructive dialogue and encouraged them to make use of the expertise offered by the IPU. The mission's report, together with any observations communicated by the parties concerned, would be presented to the Council at the next Assembly, by which time it was hoped that the situation would have improved and that some of the mission's preliminary recommendations would have been applied.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of 50 Maldives parliamentarians.

Mongolia

At the time of his assassination in 1998, Zorig Sanjasuuren - one of the founding fathers of democracy in Mongolia – had been due to be appointed prime minister. His highly political file had been classified and the Mongolian people still had the sense that the case had been suppressed to protect whoever had ordered his assassination. The Committee had made its third visit to Mongolia, in September 2017, after learning that three people had suddenly been arrested, tried *in camera* on the basis of secret evidence and sentenced to life imprisonment for having assassinated Mr. Zorig. Secret intelligence investigations were ongoing to identify those behind the assassination.

The final mission report was contained in document CL/202/11(b)-R.2, together with observations provided by Mr. Zorig's family and the Mongolian authorities. The Committee was pleased to have been able to discuss its concerns and the position of the authorities with the Mongolian delegation during the current session. International fair trial standards had been grossly violated in the trials that had taken place and the Committee agreed with Mr. Zorig's family that justice in the case had not been done. It was concerned that the three convicted persons were likely scapegoats being used to protect those who had perpetrated and ordered the assassination. In particular, there were serious indications that the confessions of those persons had been obtained by torture. The Committee was also worried about the intimidation of the families of the convicted persons, the only eyewitness to the assassination, and of others, including parliamentarians, who had publicly voiced their concerns about the judicial process.

The Committee was pleased to learn that the Mongolian Government had finally decided to make public a large part of the judicial file and thus encouraged the competent authorities to organize a new trial that would be impartial, fair and public and be conducted in the presence of international and Mongolian observers in order to avoid a serious miscarriage of justice. It welcomed the invitation to conduct a further visit to Mongolia to review the declassified information but first wished to obtain the basic information and documents on the file.

Mr. E.-A. Luvsantseren (Mongolia), expressing sincere gratitude to the IPU for its continuing interest in the case of Mr. Zorig, said that, under the Mongolian Constitution, the judicial power was vested exclusively in the courts and that there could be no interference with judges in the discharge of their duties. The involvement of parliamentarians in judicial proceedings and court decisions was thus prohibited. The Mongolian Parliament had attempted, however, to support the IPU in its efforts to organize a mission to Mongolia in order to meet the relevant authorities and

gather information. It was thanks to the efforts of the IPU that the criminal file in the case of Mr. Zorig had been declassified, which had prompted the Parliament's invitation for the Committee to conduct a further mission to Mongolia in order to examine that file and draw its conclusions accordingly. The Mongolian State, Parliament and people shared the IPU's aim of seeking justice and resolving the case of Mr. Zorig in accordance with the laws in place, to which end they were ready to cooperate with the Committee. Insofar as those laws were in keeping with internationally recognized human rights standards, it was their belief that the case would indeed be resolved and justice served.

Ms. D. Solórzano, Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, echoed by **the President**, said that the Committee was grateful to the Mongolian delegation for its cooperation and that it would endeavour at the earliest opportunity to take up the invitation extended to it.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Zorig Sanjasuuren.

Niger

The Committee had had the opportunity to discuss the issues currently before it with the two parties. For the first time ever, the National Assembly of Niger had an inclusive delegation at the current Assembly, which had facilitated constructive dialogue and allowed the Committee to hear differing political views. The Committee relied on the National Assembly to continue relaying its concerns to the competent authorities and to work actively for a solution while respecting the separation of powers. It hoped for a positive response to its request to visit Niger in order to speak directly with members of the executive and the judiciary and encourage the resumption of political dialogue, as well as efforts to resolve the cases relating to Mr. Amadou Hama, former Speaker of the National Assembly and current leader of the opposition, and Mr. Seidou Bakari, former President of his parliamentary group. In the Committee's view, both cases were without doubt politically motivated.

Regrettably, no progress had been achieved in either case and Mr. Bakri had been in detention without trial for almost two years. The merits of the charges against him also raised many questions to which no answers had been obtained. Another concern in the case of Mr. Amadou Hama was the situation of his family and the two children forcibly separated from him and his wife, who considered themselves as the children's parents, to be placed in an orphanage. The Committee called on the Nigerien authorities to comply with their obligation to protect those two children and ensure their interests, which should take precedence over any legal or political considerations.

Mr. S. Iro (Niger) thanked the Committee for its interest in Niger but said it was wrongly implied in the summary of the case, contained in document CL/202/11(b)-R.1, that Mr. Hama's parliamentary immunity had been violated. No such question had ever been raised on the two previous occasions when his immunity had been waived in exactly the same manner. The Committee had failed to take into account the submissions provided to it in good faith by the National Assembly of Niger. Those submissions asserted that the relevant parliamentary procedure had been correctly followed and, furthermore, that the case was not politically motivated, involving as it did a total of 30 individuals from all walks of life. Moreover, the Committee's own trial observer had reported in 2015 that the judicial proceedings appeared to have been properly conducted. The Committee's contention that there had been procedural abuses and human rights violations was therefore puzzling, especially in view of the court's finding that Mr. Hama had produced no evidence of such. The Committee's conclusions were thus unacceptable. The National Assembly wished to see justice take its course, without interference, in accordance with the constitutional principle of the separation of powers.

Ms. D. Solórzano, Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, thanked the delegation of Niger for its cooperation and said that the Committee felt it important to visit Niger precisely in order to establish the facts surrounding the case and draw conclusions accordingly. It therefore hoped that such a visit could be coordinated with the National Assembly.

Mr. S. Iro (Niger) reiterated that the case was not politically motivated and that there had been no violation of parliamentary procedure. Nor could there be any interference in the affairs of the judiciary. The National Assembly therefore wished to have nothing to do with the case.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Amadou Hama.

Philippines

In August 2017, a delegation of the Committee had visited in detention Senator Leila de Lima, a fervent human rights activist, who was still being held on charges of complicity in drug trafficking more than a year after her arrest. As a parliamentarian, she had been subjected to a public smear campaign by the highest authorities of the State. The situation was unacceptable and the Committee renewed its call for the Senator's immediate release. It also asked that the criminal proceedings against her be dropped, as they had clearly been motivated by her fierce opposition to President Duterte's war on drugs. The Committee urged the Senate to adopt a strong position in favour of Senator de Lima and her direct participation in its work. It proposed to send an observer to follow her trial, if necessary, and to organize a second visit of the Committee to the Philippines as a follow-up to its previous mission in August.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Ms. Leila de Lima.

Turkey

In Turkey, over 600 criminal and terrorism charges had been laid against parliamentarians who were members of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). The HDP was the country's second largest opposition party and had played a leading role in the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem. Although some of those parliamentarians had been remanded in custody, most had been released but hundreds of cases against them were ongoing. Some had been physically assaulted and disciplined after expressing their opinion during a parliamentary debate and at least 14 HDP members had reportedly been sentenced to at least one year's imprisonment. The Committee had learned that the mandate of nine parliamentarians had been terminated and that many more were set to lose their seats. It had also received detailed information stating that the aim of the judicial proceedings was to exclude Kurds and other marginalized peoples represented by the HDP from parliament. The information further stated that the accusations against the HDP parliamentarians were unfounded and undermined their fundamental rights. Many of those accusations were seemingly linked to the fact that the parliamentarians in question had criticized the policies of the Turkish President or condemned abuses committed against the population by Turkish security forces during military operations in south-eastern Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Turkish authorities rejected all those allegations, as reaffirmed in the Committee's recent meeting with the Turkish delegation to the current Assembly. The Committee had been trying to organize a mission to Turkey for over a year but its requests had twice been denied by the authorities. Furthermore, the trial observer it had sent in December 2017 to hearings involving two parliamentarians had not been allowed to enter the courtroom. Encouragingly, however, the observer had been able to gain access to the courtroom for a hearing in February 2018 and the judges had decided that she could attend all subsequent hearings involving Ms. Yüksekdağ. Lastly, the President of the Turkish IPU Group had invited the Committee to visit Turkey in order to meet with the parliamentary and executive authorities. It hoped that the visit would soon take place and achieve progress in resolving the cases under its consideration.

Mr. C. Cakir (Turkey) said that Turkey would steadfastly continue its long-standing fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a recognized terrorist organization engaged in wholesale massacre and bent on exploiting ethnic differences with the aim of dividing the country and impeding its development. The Turkish parliamentarians whose case was under consideration by the Committee had been penalized for their association with such terrorist entities and not for their Kurdish origins or legitimate political activities. They were humanely treated on a basis of equality with all other prisoners and none had been placed in solitary confinement. All Turkish prisons and detention centres, moreover, were subject to international inspection and monitoring.

As to the Committee's request to visit parliamentarians in prison, it had been denied by the Ministry of Justice on the ground that it would contribute nothing to the judicial process, which was fully independent. The Committee was wrong in claiming that parliamentarians had been physically assaulted, including within parliament, after expressing their views and that some had been charged for criticizing policies introduced by the Turkish President. Its report was therefore unacceptable.

Mr. H. Ozsoy (Turkey) said that he and his fellow HDP parliamentarians had no terrorist association whatsoever and had been targeted for none other than political reasons by the Turkish Government, which was using the counterterrorism argument in order to repress all opposition country-wide. Indeed, it branded anyone critical of its policies as a traitor and enemy of the State, as in the case of the thousands of HDP members suddenly detained for speeches they had made many years earlier. The Turkish authorities also perceived the growing HDP presence in parliament as a major obstacle to the establishment of authoritarian rule, which had prompted them to lift the parliamentary immunity of HDP members, in violation of the Constitution. Those were the bare facts of the situation in Turkey, where the Government preferred to wage a battle against the Kurds both at home and in the Syrian Arab Republic rather than pursue peace through dialogue.

Mr. S. Soendergaard (Denmark) expressed the hope that the Committee's intended fact-finding mission to Turkey would take place in the near future and said that, in response to the Turkish call made at the previous Assembly for a show of parliamentary solidarity, a delegation from the Danish Parliament had travelled to Turkey with the intention of observing a trial. It had been prevented from doing so, however, contrary to the provision in Turkish law that trials must be conducted in public. Others had had the same experience, which begged the question of why the law was being flouted and what was there to hide.

The President asked the Turkish delegation whether the Committee would be permitted to conduct a fact-finding mission to Turkey before the next Assembly.

Mr. C. Cakir (Turkey) said that no request for any fact-finding mission had been received. As to trial observers, they were indeed permitted to attend hearings and had already done so other than in two instances where such large numbers of media personnel and others had sought access to the courtroom that the court itself had decided to restrict entry. Concerning HDP parliamentarians, they had never been labelled as terrorists and continued their parliamentary activities. For its part, the Turkish delegation had responded to requests received from the Committee, with which it had also had lengthy discussions at the present session. Contrary to appearances, the delegation members were not at odds with one another but the previous speaker had unfortunately engaged in propaganda instead of focusing on the topic in hand.

Ms. D. Solórzano, Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee hoped at the earliest opportunity to take up the Turkish delegation's invitation for it to meet with the parliamentary and executive authorities in Turkey so that it could report on the outcome at the Council's next session in October 2018.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of 57 Turkish parliamentarians.

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Ms. D. Solórzano, Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that, in compliance with Rule 10 of the Rules of the Committee, another member of the Committee had been designated to report on the case concerning parliamentarians who were nationals of her country.

Ms. A. Jerkov (Serbia), member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the situation in Venezuela had further deteriorated after the sudden announcement that early presidential elections would take place on 20 May of the current year. Talks had broken down between the Venezuelan Government and the opposition, which was boycotting the elections, having taken the view that the conditions were not in place for them to be free and fair. Even if it had not so decided, it had in any event been barred from participating in the election by the National Electoral Council. To make matters worse, the highest-ranking State officials had also publicly endorsed the holding of early legislative elections, which would curtail the term of the current, opposition-led National Assembly otherwise due to run until 2021.

In that context, the Committee was all the more worried about the continued repression of opposition members and about efforts to undermine the Parliament. It was shocked at the reports of attacks on parliamentarians and the role of State security agents and government supporters in those attacks, which had gone unpunished. As the Council would be aware, the Committee's Vice-President, Ms. Delsa Solórzano, had been a victim of those attacks. The Committee called on the authorities to put an end to that pattern of abuse. It remained deeply concerned about the general restrictions faced by the National Assembly, which had received no State funds for over a year and a half. In the meantime, the Constituent Assembly, rather than focus on redrafting the Constitution, had steadily taken over the functions of the National Assembly. The Committee urged the authorities to respect the powers of the National Assembly and its members and to provide the necessary funding. It also invited all IPU Members to do what they could to help address those serious concerns and to resolve the current crisis in Venezuela, including by facilitating the resumption of a political dialogue, adopting public statements and making representations to the Venezuelan authorities.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of 57 Venezuelan parliamentarians.

Mr. Y. Jabour (Venezuela) said it was untrue to say that the conditions for free and fair elections were not in place, as various opposition members had in fact been recently elected to regional and municipal office and others were also standing in the upcoming presidential elections. Furthermore, some of the cases of alleged human rights violations related only to former parliamentarians who had proven links to extortion networks, were fugitives from Venezuelan justice, had called for United States military intervention in Venezuela and incited acts of criminality. Three of the cases also involved individuals who had never held parliamentary office, having had their candidacies rejected by the National Electoral Council. He intended to disseminate in Venezuela the names of those whose human rights had allegedly been violated in order to show how they were being depicted as victims.

In Venezuela, there was separation of powers. A part of the Venezuelan opposition nonetheless recognized neither the executive nor the moral authority of the judiciary and had lost credibility following its failure to bring about regime change. It would not be participating in the presidential elections and its efforts to undermine Venezuelan sovereignty through foreign intervention were amply countered by the majority of Venezuelans who stood in defence of the country's dignity.

Mr. T. Guanipa (Venezuela) said that, as a member of the party responsible for the human rights violations concerned, the previous speaker had simply attempted to justify the repressive practices of the Venezuelan State. His threat to disseminate the list of names was a tactic designed to restrict the freedom of those who believed in democratic values and independence of thought. There could be no justification for the imprisonment of parliamentarians by a Government immersed in corruption that preferred to let its people die of hunger rather than relinquish power.

There was in fact no separation of powers in Venezuela, where the Constituent Assembly had illicitly snatched power from the National Assembly. In a flagrant abuse of their human rights, the elected representatives of the people had received no pay for some two years and were treated as terrorists and obliged to leave and enter the country by surreptitious means in order to avoid confiscation of their passports. It was imperative for the Committee to conduct a mission to Venezuela, as it had been seeking to do since 2013. He called on the members of his delegation to respect the international organizations of which Venezuela was a member and to join in defending the rights of Venezuelans, who had but two choices: to flee the country or to remain and fight for freedom.

The Secretary General took the Chair in the temporary absence of the President.

Ms. Y. Ferrer Gómez (Cuba) expressed her delegation's reservation to the Committee's report and recommendations on the ground that they lacked objectivity, having been formulated on the basis of information provided by only one of the political parties in Venezuela. She said that difficulties in that country would be resolved by the Venezuelan people alone through dialogue and negotiation.

Ms. M.L. Alcorta Suero (Peru), noting that the IPU was the home of freedom and democracy, said that recent Venezuelan elections had been a disgrace and that election observers such as herself had been subjected to ill-treatment by the corrupt and shameless dictatorship in power. Venezuelan President Maduro had in fact been disinvited from the forthcoming Summit of the Americas in Peru, a country that had in the past six months taken in many Venezuelans fleeing an intolerable situation, including food and medicine shortages, and was struggling to cope. IPU delegates should recognize the wrongdoings of their executive authorities instead of speaking in their defence.

The President of the IPU resumed the Chair.

The President said that the IPU encouraged and welcomed delegations and dialogue that were inclusive in terms of both political representation and gender.

Ms. A. Jerkov (Serbia), member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee considered all complaints and cases with the requisite seriousness and care and did not take its decisions lightly. As those decisions were evidence-based, the Committee had been requesting a fact-finding mission to Venezuela since 2013, but either its requests had been denied or visas had been refused. The Committee continued to hope that such a mission would soon be organized in the interest of progress towards resolving the current situation.

Zambia

Ms. D. Solórzano, Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, resuming her report, said that the Committee had had a very constructive discussion during the current session with the Speaker of the Zambian Parliament. On several occasions, in 2012 and 2013, the police had exceeded their powers in meetings organized by opposition parliamentarians and had made arbitrary arrests by invoking provisions of the archaic Public Order Act. The Act was currently under review, however, with the intention of fully aligning it with international and national human rights standards and the Committee believed that its provisions would be fairly and impartially applied. The IPU was willing to contribute to those efforts by sharing relevant experiences from other countries. It would therefore make an offer of assistance to the Minister of Justice, with the support of the Speaker of Parliament, and hoped that the offer would be followed up promptly. The Committee had decided, however, to close the cases before it, as the complainant had provided no updated information for quite some time, despite the many requests made to it.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of 11 Zambian parliamentarians.

Mr. Q. Khader (Palestine), thanking the Committee for its excellent work, said that his delegation had regularly provided it with updates concerning the cases of Palestinian parliamentarians who had either been unfairly tried and convicted by Israeli courts or were being arbitrarily held without charge in Israeli administrative detention for political reasons. If it was to maintain its credibility and avoid accusations of double standards, the Committee must urgently address those cases and also follow up on previous decisions by calling for the release of Mr. Marwan Barghouti and Mr. Ahmed Sa`adat. It must also exert pressure on the Israeli authorities to allow visits to the Palestinian parliamentarians held in their prisons and detention centres.

The President said that the IPU fully appreciated the concerns expressed, which the Committee had long had at heart and was continuing to address as part of its immense workload.

Ms. D. Solórzano, Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, welcomed the views of the Palestinian delegate, saying that they signalled the visibility of the Committee's work to protect parliamentarians and the institution of parliament. The fact that not all of the many cases under consideration by the Committee had been presented in no way meant that those cases were not being addressed. Indeed, the Committee would be dealing with a series of other cases at its next session in October 2018.

Mr. Q. Khader (Palestine) said that it would be preferable for Members to be informed in advance as to which cases were to be addressed at each Assembly.

Ms. S. Ksantini (Tunisia), while praising the Committee for its work, said that it must take a stand against the administrative detention of Palestinian parliamentarians, whose human rights abuses at the hands of the Zionist entity should also be highlighted on the IPU website. Indeed, the Palestinian issue must remain on the IPU agenda until all related resolutions were fully implemented, a goal that should be assisted by the IPU through defending, without discrimination or double standards, the rights of all individuals.

The President said that information pertaining to the important Palestinian issue was indeed available on the IPU website and that the Secretariat would be pleased to direct Members to the relevant pages.

Mr. A. Aldeqbasi (Kuwait) agreed that the IPU website must remain alive to the ongoing violation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories and to the Israeli non-compliance with United Nations resolutions on Palestine, saying that both of those facts were recognized by the international community and media.

The President said that the emergency item chosen for debate at the current Assembly was proof that the IPU was addressing the Palestinian issue, adding that suggestions for improvement of the IPU website or communications were always welcome. As part of the only organization working to ensure respect for the human rights of parliamentarians, the Committee had a heavy workload and needed the full support of IPU Members.

Turning to the matter of the new vacancy to be filled on the Committee, she announced that the Secretary General had been informed by letter that Mr. Farooq Naek of Pakistan, whose details were set out in document CL/202/11(b)-P.2, had withdrawn his candidature for the position owing to his unavoidable absence from the Assembly. Mr. Naek had voiced his support for the remaining candidate, Mr. David Carter of New Zealand, whose particulars were contained in document CL/202/11(b)-P.1. She invited Mr. Carter to introduce himself to the Council.

Mr. D. Carter (New Zealand) said in response that he had been a parliamentarian for over two decades and had an enduring interest in the human rights of parliamentarians. He had been privileged to join the Committee's recent fact-finding mission to the Maldives and fully recognized the value of the Committee's work and its centrality to the IPU mandate. He looked forward to devoting his time to working with the Committee, were he to be elected.

The President said she took it that the Council wished to elect Mr. Carter as a member of the Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 8 of the agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IPU STRATEGY FOR 2017-2021 (CL/202/8-R.1)

The President drew attention to document CL/202/8-R.1, which contained an overview of activities undertaken since October 2017 in implementation of the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021.

The Secretary General, reporting with the aid of a slide presentation on those activities, said that the document moreover indicated the future activities to be undertaken in connection with each strategic objective, including next steps for IPU Members. In outlining every such step, he urged follow-up of the suggested actions and furthermore called for additional endorsements of the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments, especially by Members from Africa. He also encouraged Members' active engagement in the process of reporting to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development scheduled to convene in July 2018. Lastly, he announced that follow-up information received concerning the resolution adopted at the 137th Assembly on the situation of the Rohingya was available to all those wishing to use it as guidance for their own follow-up actions.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) said that the IPU Strategy embodied a truly impressive array of activities. Its five-year span was therefore fully appropriate, as it would have been a challenge in a shorter period to raise the funding required for the implementation of those activities.

Mr. J.F. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), referring to the annex to the document, asked why Zimbabwe was listed among the countries with cases before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, as its Parliament had been informed that the case in question had been closed.

The Secretary General said that the case had indeed been closed at the current session but only after the document had been prepared. The case would not be listed in future.

A delegate from Bangladesh appealed to the IPU to take action to address the grave humanitarian situation of the Rohingya people and ensure that Bangladesh, itself a developing country, received the support needed for it to host the ever-increasing number of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

The President said that the assistance provided to the Rohingya people by Bangladesh was greatly appreciated.

The Secretary General said that he had cited the information received concerning follow-up of the resolution relating to the Rohingya as an example of action that Members were expected to take in order to ensure the implementation of such an important IPU resolution. Any additional information received would likewise be highlighted. The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law would moreover be reporting to the Council at the current session on the same subject, which would undoubtedly provide further guidance as to how the global parliamentary community could drive progress towards resolving the situation of the Rohingya people.

The Governing Council took note of the activities undertaken in implementation of the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021.

Item 9 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

(CL/202/9-R.1.rev and P.1)

The President drew attention to the checklist of activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system over the previous six months, as contained in document CL/202/9-R.1.rev, and to a draft resolution on "Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU", which had been prepared for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly for adoption and was set out in document CL/202/9-P.1.

The Secretary General, referring to the checklist of activities, said that the IPU had taken care to focus its cooperation with the United Nations system on the areas covered in the IPU Strategy. He highlighted in particular the IPU's ongoing contribution to the development of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees, as well as the conclusion of memoranda of understanding for cooperation with UNDP and UN Environment. The latter would be signed in April following approval by the IPU governing bodies. The IPU was also currently in discussions with the WHO with a view to concluding a memorandum of understanding aimed at scaling up the existing cooperation between the two organizations in support of better health outcomes.

The Governing Council took note of the checklist of activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations.

The President, turning to the draft resolution set out in document CL/202/9-P.1, said that the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations in New York, as the country holding the IPU presidency, would be taking the lead in the related intergovernmental negotiating process. She

called on all Members to support that process by consulting with their ministers for foreign affairs and ambassadors to the United Nations in New York with a view to providing input to the draft and attracting the maximum number of sponsors, which currently stood at 106. She also urged as many Members as possible to attend the debate on the draft resolution, which was scheduled for 22 May 2018, and to encourage their national delegations to speak in its favour at that time.

The Secretary General, outlining the substance of the draft resolution, said that the text built on the consensus resolution adopted in 2016 on the same subject by covering the new and wide-ranging areas of interaction between the IPU, national parliaments and the United Nations. The text also identified the United Nations agencies that would be key to driving forward the IPU's work in those areas, which included youth participation, democracy and human rights, counterterrorism and health. Among other things, the draft resolution called for the establishment of an international day of parliamentarism on 30 June of each year, a date that coincided with that of the first IPU Assembly in 1889, and for the role and contribution of parliaments to be more systematically reflected in the main reports and strategic plans of the United Nations system.

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), supported by **a delegate from Spain**, said that parliamentarians must indeed seek to lobby the strongest possible support for the draft resolution. Its adoption would assist their activities in all of the areas mentioned therein, in which they played a vital role by virtue of their legislative, oversight and budgetary functions. She reiterated the appeal for Members to attend the debate and thereby demonstrate the seriousness of their intentions concerning interaction with the United Nations system.

The President said that it was also important for Members to lobby support for the establishment of an international day of parliamentarism, as well as for the inclusion of a reference to parliamentarians in the global compact, again in view of their crucial legislative, oversight and budgetary role in ensuring its implementation. She took it that the Council wished to approve the draft resolution.

It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

Third sitting

Wednesday, 28 March 2018

The meeting was called to order at 2.50 p.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Ms. G. Cuevas (Mexico), in the Chair.

Item 10 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND THE SITUATION OF CERTAIN PARLIAMENTS

(a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU

The President announced that no requests had been received for affiliation or reaffiliation to the IPU.

(b) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General, reporting on the situation of certain parliaments and the recommendations made in that regard by the Executive Committee, said that the situation in Burundi had been under examination for some time. Difficulties had arisen with regard to divergences in the interpretation of the Constitution with regard to the President's desire to seek a third term of office. Despite those divergences, the incumbent President had sought, and won, a third term. Plans were in place to organize a constitutional referendum, to approve new provisions regarding the status of the President. The two-term limit had been removed, as had the possibility of impeachment by the Senate. The proposed revisions to the Constitution gave cause for concern. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation, express its concern regarding recent developments, and encourage dialogue between all relevant stakeholders, including those in the diaspora.

The situation in Cambodia had received extensive attention from the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians; the political space in Cambodia was shrinking, and 55 opposition parliamentarians had been stripped of their mandate. There was increasing concern that the opposition was unable to participate freely in political processes, and that forthcoming elections would be neither free nor fair. The authorities in Cambodia had expressed their disapproval of IPU interference in their domestic affairs. The Executive Committee had therefore recommended that the Governing Council should continue its efforts to engage with the authorities in Cambodia, encourage dialogue between the various stakeholders, and offer IPU mediation services. Cambodia was not represented as a parliamentary delegation to the present Assembly.

Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the term of the President had expired in 2016. There was increasing pressure from all sides to ensure that elections could take place. According to the Constitution, the President could not seek a third term. An agreement had been concluded in December 2016, which had been endorsed by a broad spectrum of political stakeholders, providing for the President to remain in office until the next election, on the understanding that he could not stand as a candidate in that election, and for the appointment of the Prime Minister in a consensus between the ruling and major opposition parties. There had also been an agreement that several political detainees, including two parliamentarians, would be released. Unfortunately, that agreement had not been honoured and presidential elections had not been held. The Executive Committee recommended that the Council continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to encourage the holding of elections and that the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians remain seized of the situation.

The IPU remained engaged with Eritrea on human rights issues although it was not an IPU Member. Elections had not been held since 2002, and many parliamentarians had been victimized, disappeared and tortured. In recent weeks, the IPU Secretariat had established contact with the Permanent Mission of Eritrea in Geneva, which had stated its openness to dialogue. The Executive Committee recommended that the Council should take note of that positive development, and urge the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to continue its work on the cases of Eritrean parliamentarians currently before it.

On the situation in Guinea-Bissau, the parliament had been dysfunctional for several years owing to in-fighting within the ruling party. The Speaker of Parliament had approached the IPU requesting mediation. Despite efforts to help resolve the crisis, no feedback had been received from the authorities. The Executive Committee recommended that the Council should remain seized of the matter and reiterate the IPU's offer to provide mediation.

Regarding the situation of two parallel parliaments in Libya - one in Tobruk and another in Tripoli - the IPU recognized the former, as did the international community. Efforts were being made to establish a fully-fledged bicameral parliament, with a Senate and a House of Representatives. Elections were in the offing, which would help to rectify the situation. A memorandum of understanding had been concluded through which the IPU would provide technical assistance to the parliament. The Executive Committee recommended that the Governing Council should take note of the plans to hold elections.

The IPU was engaged with the Maldives from a human rights perspective; the challenges in that regard reflected the political environment in general. Over recent months the situation had deteriorated, with an attempt to impeach the Speaker resulting in parliamentary activities being blocked, repeated cases of floor-crossing, and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency during which several parliamentarians had been arrested and detained. The Supreme Court had deemed the state of emergency unconstitutional, following which several Supreme Court judges had been sequestered. A fact-finding mission had taken place, and the Executive Committee had heard a report from the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The Executive Committee recommended that the Council should send a strong message on the need for a free and fair trial, or the immediate release, of those detained parliamentarians and the restitution of their political mandate, and to offer the IPU's mediation services with a view to resolving the crisis.

In South Sudan, a fratricidal war had broken out almost immediately after independence. In 2017, an agreement had been reached to cease hostility and establish a transitional legislative assembly. The country remained in dire financial straits. The Executive Committee recommended that the Council should take note of the situation and urge that legislative elections be held as soon as possible.

The Executive Committee had received an extensive briefing on the activities of the Working Group on Syria which was trying to organize a visit to the Syrian Arab Republic to see how the IPU could usefully contribute to the resolution of the crisis and support the Syrian Parliament. As yet, however, no agreement had been reached on the modalities of that visit, and it had therefore not taken place. The Executive Committee recommended that the Council should encourage the Working Group to continue its efforts, including by organizing a visit to Syria, and that the IPU could offer technical assistance for preparing a new constitution, which would include new provisions on the establishment of a strong parliament and reflect the will of the Syrian people.

Following the coup d'état that had taken place in Thailand in 2014, the Thai transitional legislative authority (National Legislative Assembly) had been actively engaged with the IPU in its efforts to implement the roadmap on the return to democracy. The Governing Council had decided not to suspend Thailand's membership of the IPU. Technical assistance had been provided to the Thai Parliament in drafting a new constitution and legislative framework. While implementation of the roadmap had been subject to delay, the Thai authorities had remained committed to holding elections by February 2019. Some legislative texts had been adopted and 10 organic laws were awaiting validation by the Constitutional Court. Political parties had been authorized to begin operations and prepare for the elections. The Executive Committee had taken note of the situation and recommended that the Governing Council should encourage the Thai authorities to continue to work actively to ensure that the elections would take place and that a new, fully-fledged Parliament of Thailand could be welcomed to the IPU.

The President said that she had met with the Thai delegation to the 138th IPU Assembly, members of which had expressed their full commitment to implementing the roadmap and ensuring that the elections went ahead unimpeded.

The Secretary General said that with regard to the situation in Turkey, there was no additional information further to the report already provided by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The Executive Committee had recommended that all ongoing trials in Turkey should be subject to due process, and that the IPU should be granted access to the prisons where members of parliament were being detained in order to ascertain the conditions of their detention. The Executive Committee had also expressed interest in organizing a high-level diplomatic visit, in which the President and Executive Committee members would participate to engage in dialogue with the Turkish authorities.

The President added that the Executive Committee had expressed an interest in supporting the work of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. Several members of the Executive Committee had expressed a willingness to participate in such high-level missions.

The Secretary General, turning to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, said that the Executive Committee had taken note of the political crisis, which had resulted in Parliament's inability to function, and had hoped to be able to secure a long-overdue IPU mission to ascertain the facts and promote dialogue between the authorities. The President and Executive Committee would work to promote such an outcome.

Yemen had been in a situation of turmoil for several years, which had affected the functioning of Parliament. Elections had not taken place since 2003, and parliament was now split into two factions, based in Sana'a and Aden. The Governing Council had previously decided to freeze Yemen's participation in the work of the IPU until the status of Parliament had been ascertained, and efforts had been made to work with the various factions to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Yemen, and to promote dialogue and reconciliation. Since the 137th IPU Assembly, the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh had been assassinated. Some signs of rapprochement had, however, been visible, with a unified delegation participating in the current Assembly. The Executive Committee had stressed the importance of fostering dialogue between all sides to work to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis.

The Governing Council took note of the information communicated to it in respect of the situation of the parliaments mentioned and approved the recommendations of the Executive Committee concerning those parliaments.

(d) Universal membership
(CL/202/10-R.1)

The President drew attention to the report on universal membership, contained in document CL/202/10-R.1 and said that the IPU's current membership stood at 178 of the world's 193 parliaments. A concerted effort would be required to bring the small island developing parliaments into the IPU. Above and beyond numbers, the quality of membership also needed to be improved. Geopolitical groups should encourage their members to pay their dues to the Organization and ensure that the IPU had sufficient funds at its disposal to pursue its activities. Following considerable discussion on the matter of membership, the Executive Committee had decided to recommend that the practice of the United Nations and other international organizations should be adopted, by suspending the voting rights, rather than the membership, of parliaments that failed to pay their assessed contributions. The Governing Council was therefore invited to adopt the new modalities of membership, which were set out in detail in the document currently before it.

Ms. A. Filip, Director of the Division for Member Parliaments and External Relations, said that obtaining universal membership was a key strategic objective of the IPU, which had grown from a loose partnership between individual members of parliament in the late 19th century, who had been active in the peace movement and believed in the value of dialogue to overcome conflict, into a global organization of national parliaments. Most of the Member States of the United Nations, the parliaments of which were not members of the IPU, were small island developing States (SIDS). A Parliamentary Solidarity Fund had therefore been established to foster engagement with their parliaments. The Fund had been used to facilitate the participation of a delegation from the Parliament of Vanuatu in the work of IPU Assemblies, which had led to Vanuatu's subsequent application for membership of the Organization. Regional seminars and workshops had been organized; an invitation from the Parliament of Suriname to host a regional workshop on climate change for Caribbean island parliaments was particularly welcome.

The Statutes and Rules of the IPU provided for two circumstances in which a parliament's membership of the Organization could be suspended: the unconstitutional dissolution of parliament; and non-payment assessed contributions for more than three years. At its previous session in St. Petersburg, the Executive Committee had examined and discussed the practices of the United Nations and other organizations, where failure to pay dues would result in a loss of rights, rather than a suspension of membership. The proposed changes would modify current IPU

practices along those lines; failure to pay assessed contributions for three or more years and the inability to show that circumstances beyond the control of the parliament in question had resulted in those arrears, would result in a change of membership status to "non-participating member". Non-participating members would not be entitled to attend IPU statutory meetings, to vote, or to hold any IPU office. Efforts would be made to engage with members in arrears. Decisions to suspend rights would be taken on a case-by-case basis, and the restitution of rights would take place upon payment of arrears.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) said that universal membership should not be the ultimate aspiration of the IPU, but rather to ensure that Member Parliaments upheld the values of the Organization in all their actions. The first sentence of the IPU Statutes and Rules stated that the Organization worked to "promote, protect and strengthen democracy around the world". The IPU must uphold that standard at all times. Failure to deliver on that principle was contrary to the core values of the Organization. The democracy of the IPU itself and the conduct of its Member Parliaments should be the priority. In order for the Organization to function, Member Parliaments must pay their fees. Failure to do so should therefore result in a suspension of membership. The rules must be easy to understand. Consideration of membership on a case-by-case basis could result in lengthy discussions about small differences. His delegation therefore advised against the proposed change, which, he feared, would weaken the Organization and make it less relevant.

Mr. W. William (Seychelles) said that he welcomed the initiatives being taken to encourage more memberships, and requested further information on the new Parliamentary Solidarity Fund. There were 14 SIDS in the South Pacific and Caribbean that were not yet members; he wished to know what measures were being taken to encourage their membership. He also asked what progress had been made in respect of efforts to encourage the United States and other larger parliaments to join the Organization.

The Secretary General said that the qualitative nature of membership and the ability of members to live up to the standards of the organization indeed required discussion. Regarding the financial aspects of membership, a lot of time and resources were spent trying to encourage non-Members to join the IPU. Under the proposed new system, rather than going through the process of reapplication for membership, the parliament in question would simply resume its rights on payment of its arrears. Some parliaments, however, had compelling reasons for being unable to pay, which should be taken into account on a case-by-case basis. The proposals currently before the Governing Council were consistent with the practices of the United Nations.

Turning to the question of SIDS, he said that requests for support under the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund had not been received from those parliaments. The criteria for applications to the Fund had been set by the Executive Committee, and included establishing that the applicant parliament was unable to contribute financially to the Organization, and ensuring that the country concerned was not considered as a tax haven. Those conditions had been set to provide a safeguard for the Fund's use.

Regarding the situation of the membership of the United States Congress, non-payment of assessed contributions had led to the suspension of its membership, since which time the IPU Secretariat and partners had been making continuous, strenuous efforts to encourage its reapplication for membership. Despite those efforts, while the US Congress continued to feel that its interests were not served by the IPU, it would not join the Organization. The President of the IPU had underscored the importance of strong engagement with Congress, led by the IPU's Member Parliaments, not only by the Secretariat.

Ms. A. Filip, Director of the Division for Member Parliaments and External Relations, said that in 2009–2010, a bipartisan resolution had been submitted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the issue of the Congress rejoining the IPU. However, a two-thirds majority had not been achieved and the bill had not been brought to the floor. Since that time the political situation in the United States had become more complex. The IPU would, however, continue its efforts to bring the US Congress back to the IPU fold.

The President added that the Executive Committee had discussed how best to lobby the United States, and had decided to develop a strategy in that regard after the results of the Senate elections due to be held in November 2018.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) said that he wished to caution against bringing IPU practices into line with those of the United Nations, since the United Nations was facing some considerable difficulties and the IPU should not be led down the same track. The only way to ensure that the IPU budget would be fully funded was to secure the payment of membership fees. A change in the sanctions for failure to pay could cause severe problems for the budget and functioning of the Organization.

The Secretary General said that due note had been taken of the concerns raised. Members would need to pay their assessed contributions in full to be granted full participation rights.

The President said that in the absence of any further comments or objections she would take it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the revised membership criteria, and would agree that the Statutes and Rules of the IPU should be amended accordingly, for adoption by the Governing Council at its next session.

It was so agreed.

Item 11 of the agenda
(continued)

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(a) Forum of Women Parliamentarians
(CL/202/11(a)-R.1)

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, said that the 27th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians had been well attended, with 90 delegates from 63 countries, including 14 men. The Forum had discussed the root causes of the underrepresentation of women in politics and the stagnation in progress in that regard, and had looked at innovative ways to address them. The discussion had begun with a dialogue between the Secretary General and the Permanent Representative of Canada in Geneva, who were among the International Gender Champions, an initiative which worked towards gender parity on panels and delegations in international forums. Members of the Forum had agreed that education and socialization were crucial to prepare girls for political life, and to change cultural and social norms. Gender-based violence, including cyber-violence, and negative stereotyping of women in politics also impeded women's participation, and required urgent action. Internal reforms and robust plans were needed at the level of national parliaments and political parties, to make them fully gender sensitive.

The draft resolutions to be adopted by the Standing Committees on Peace and International Security and on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade had also been discussed; both standing committees had approved all the amendments proposed by the Forum. The Bureau of Women Parliamentarians had elected Ms. U. Karlsson (Sweden) as President of the Bureau, Ms. S. Wakarura Kihika (Kenya) as First Vice-President and Ms. A. Al-Basti (United Arab Emirates) as Second Vice-President. As her tenure as President of the Bureau had come to an end, she thanked all those who had participated in its work and assured the newly elected officers of her continued support.

The President announced that the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians had also elected: for the African Group, Ms. M. Drame (Mali); for the Arab Group, Ms. I. Almlohi (Syrian Arab Republic); for the Asia-Pacific Group, Ms. P. Hematbhai (India); for the Eurasia Group: Ms. E. Vtorygina (Russian Federation) and Ms. Z. Greceanii (Republic of Moldova); for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. J. Vera (Chile) and Ms. K. Sosa de Rodas (El Salvador); and for the Twelve Plus Group, Ms. A. Tolley (New Zealand). One vacancy remained for the Asia-Pacific Group.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/202/11(c)-R.1 and P.1 to P.3)

Ms. S. Atallahjan (Canada), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, presented the work of the Committee, which had met with a unified delegation from Yemen, members of which had provided an update on the situation in Yemen, and had acknowledged the role of the IPU in providing a platform for dialogue between the two factions of parliament. The Committee had also been briefed by a representative of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. Members from Israel and Palestine had shared their views on the United States Administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Committee had agreed that the IPU should continue to provide a platform for dialogue with a view to seeking a lasting, fair and objective solution. The Secretariat had provided information on progress with regard to the Science for Peace Schools project; recent events with regard to Jerusalem had meant that little appetite remained for the continuation of the project. Members of the Committee had, however, expressed their commitment to move the project forward, since opportunities to build bridges and foster peace, particularly for the good of future generations, should never be ignored. The Secretariat would draw up a plan of action for the next steps in the Committee's projects, including details for the third roundtable on water and follow-up to the Science for Peace Schools project.

The President said that the Governing Council was required to elect two female members of the Committee, and had received candidatures from Ms. M. Guerra Castillo (Mexico) and Ms. A. Makonda Ridley (Malawi).

The Governing Council took note of the report and approved the two candidatures.

(d) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/202/11(d)-R.1 and P.1)

The President announced that the Committee, along with the IPU Secretariat in a joint initiative with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), were launching a guide to international refugee protection and building State asylum systems. The publication would provide step-by-step guidance on implementation, to ensure that parliaments had the tools to improve national legislation and make real change.

Ms. M. Haj Hassan Osman (Sudan), presenting the work of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, said that it had met with representatives of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to discuss the situation of the Rohingya people. Background information and a written report had been received from the Parliament of Myanmar. Although some one million Rohingya people had found refuge in Bangladesh, despite the significant efforts of the host country, more support was needed to cater to the needs both of the refugees and the host community. The approaching monsoon season was likely to leave refugees in Bangladesh cut off from all services and support. Several protection issues had been raised, including challenges in obtaining identification documents for refugees, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and providing education. The host community was also in dire need of support; refugees currently accounted for one-third of the population of Cox's Bazar. Their return must remain voluntary. Attention must be paid, therefore, to overcoming the root causes of the crisis. The Committee would continue to pursue dialogue with the Parliament of Myanmar, and had requested a fact-finding mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The Committee had also discussed the draft global compact on refugees, which currently made no reference to parliaments as key stakeholders. IPU Member Parliaments should lobby their capitals to ensure that such a reference would be included. Lastly, she drew attention to the joint IPU-UNHCR publication introduced by the President, which contained a wealth of information on refugee protection. Parliaments had a duty to everything possible to change the lives of the most vulnerable, whose lives were being devastated by conflict.

The President announced that the Governing Council was required to elect one member to the Committee, from the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean. The candidature of Mr. A. Sinmaleza (Ecuador) had been received.

The Governing Council took note of the report and elected Mr. Sinmaleza to the Committee.

(e) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/202/11(e)-R.1)

The President informed the Governing Council that the Executive Committee had appointed Mr. K. Lusaka (Kenya), Ms. H. Haukeland Liadal (Norway) and Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) to the Gender Partnership Group.

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), Chairperson of the Gender Partnership Group, reporting on the Group's work, said that the Gender Partnership Group had reviewed figures regarding the composition of delegations present at the 138th IPU Assembly. The time had come to break the 30 per cent glass ceiling and find new ways to progress towards equality in participation. The number of single-sex delegations must also be reduced. The Group had discussed how to support the promotion of women's participation in parliament worldwide and had agreed to invite delegations from countries that had no women in parliament to enter into dialogue, to see how the Group could help. It had also agreed to carry out, where possible, missions to the countries concerned. Lastly, the Group had taken note of the IPU's work on combatting violence against women in parliament.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

The President thanked Ms. Mensah-Williams for her sterling contribution to the work of the IPU as a champion of women's rights and a role model to many young women parliamentarians. She had also played a key role on the Executive Committee. The Organization would count on her continued engagement.

Ms. Mensah-Williams was presented with a certificate of appreciation for her contribution to the work of the Executive Committee.

(f) Advisory Group on Health
(CL/202/11(f)-R.1)

Ms. U. Karlsson (Sweden) delivered the report of the Advisory Group on Health, as contained in document CL/202/11(f)-R.1.

Mr. C. Sebuhero (Rwanda) said that a delegation from the Advisory Group had visited Rwanda, and had been shown round a variety of health centres, hospitals and clinics. The Parliament of Rwanda had shared with the delegation its experiences with regard to health care, and expressed its readiness to participate in exchanges of information and best practices with other countries and parliaments, which could contribute to strengthening Rwanda's health system. A slide presentation illustrated the field visit.

(g) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/202/11(g)-R.1)

Mr. M. Bouva (Suriname), introducing the report of the work of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians contained in document CL/202/11(f)-R.1, said that the Forum had taken stock of national efforts to enhance youth participation and had highlighted the importance of lowering of the age requirement to run for office, the adoption and implementation of youth electoral quotas, and the enhancement of youth participation at the local and provincial levels as strategies conducive to the election of more young parliamentarians. The Forum had welcomed the Executive Committee's amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules to enhance youth participation. He urged all IPU Member Parliaments to support the "Not too young to run" campaign for youth empowerment.

The Forum had also discussed policy reforms with regard to HIV/AIDS and youth health. Young people faced many barriers to health services. Parliamentarians had a role to play in reviewing and reforming health policy to ensure equitable access for all, and to prevent stigma and discrimination. The Bureau of the Forum had met to discuss future activities, and had identified topics for discussion, including the use of technology to promote the work of young parliamentarians. The Forum also wished to take stock of progress in implementing the IPU resolution on youth participation in democratic processes, which had been adopted at the 122nd IPU Assembly in Bangkok in 2010.

The Secretary General took the Chair in the temporary absence of the President.

The Governing Council took note of the report and endorsed the recommendations of the Forum.

(h) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism
(CL/202/11(h)-R.1)

Ms. M. Kiener-Nellen (Switzerland), Vice-President of the High-level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, said that the Advisory Group had been set up to strengthen IPU cooperation with the United Nations on the issue of countering terrorism and to encourage the harmonization of national legislation. At its first meeting, the Advisory Group had finalized its Terms of Reference, which were currently before the Governing Council, annexed to document CL/202/11(h)-R.1. The terms of reference specified that any recommendations made by the Advisory Group would be based on consensus. In the event that consensus could not be reached, the majority view, along with details of dissenting opinions, would be transmitted as a whole to the Governing Council to ensure full transparency. Presentations had been heard from one of the key authors of the Global Terrorism Index and the Chief of the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as a representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who had briefed the Group on the rule of law and human rights aspects of the fight against terrorism. The Group had been informed about joint initiatives between the IPU and UNODC, and the history of that cooperation. The Group would meet again twice during the course of 2018. Those meetings would be funded from extrabudgetary sources and would therefore not have any financial implications for the IPU.

The President resumed the chair.

Mr. D. Marie (France), supported by **Mr. D. McGuinty (Canada)**, expressed his delegation's reservations to the procedure for establishing the composition of the Advisory Group, which was neither comprehensive nor pertinent, and lacked equitable geographical representation. The Parliament of France would therefore not recognize the work of the Group, and reserved the right to refuse any decision made by the Group that it considered counter to France's national security. The delegation of Germany would submit a similar reservation in writing.

Mr. M. Kadam (Chad), supported by **Mr. M. Timbine (Mali)** and **Mr. A.A. Jama (Somalia)**, also calling into question the composition of the Advisory Group, said that he could not understand why a member from sub-Saharan Africa had not been appointed. Terrorism was rife in the Sahel, causing immense suffering in the region. With such a wealth of painful experience, the African region had much to contribute to the work of the Advisory Group, and must be adequately represented.

Mr. Y. Jabour (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), supported by **Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal)** said that while he welcomed the initiative to establish the Advisory Group, he agreed that the Group's composition would merit further consideration. Countering terrorism was a crucial matter. He would therefore suggest that the Terms of Reference be the subject of further, transparent discussion and refinement at the Governing Council's next session.

Mr. I. Macdonald (Australia) said that counter-terrorism was a very important issue and he was pleased that the IPU was involved in that area of work. Australia had been an original member of the Advisory Group but had understood that subsequent changes to the rules or composition of the Group had been made since the previous session. As a result, his delegation therefore wished to reserve its position on the report and on the work of the Advisory Group as a whole, until clarification on the process for establishing the Group's composition had been received.

The President clarified that the discussion was centred on the Terms of Reference and the expanded composition of the Group to 15 members.

Mr. D. McGuinty (Canada) said that greater efforts should be made to seek a more robust, inclusive and transparent process for establishing not only the Advisory Group's membership but also its funding sources. All geopolitical groups would benefit from more information on the Advisory Group's modalities. Terrorism was not only a profoundly important issue, but one that was fraught with risk, and transparency in all related activities was therefore particularly crucial.

Mr. A. Al Mahmoud (Qatar) said that the IPU had been founded on the principles of democracy, transparency and dignity. Those principles must be upheld in all of its procedures. The membership of the Advisory Group had been appointment-based and not sufficiently democratic. The composition should be selected on the same basis as for the standing committees. Further information should also be provided on the Advisory Group's mandate, in particular its objectives and responsibilities. The Terms of Reference should therefore be discussed in detail at the next IPU Assembly, thereby giving all Member Parliaments of the IPU sufficient time to give them thorough consideration.

The Secretary General said that over the course of several years, the IPU had adopted a series of resolutions relating to action that parliaments could take in general to counter terrorism, and in furtherance of relevant United Nations resolutions. A gap had, however, been identified between the intentions and the actions of the parliamentary community. A decision had therefore been taken to establish an IPU project to assist parliaments in devising legislation to prevent terrorism and violent extremism, and to build parliamentary capacity to counter terrorism through more inclusive mechanisms of governance that would reach out to the whole of society. The project would be of a technical nature, and would be implemented in collaboration with other relevant international entities, such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It had been decided, in view of the opinions of the IPU membership, that since terrorism was such a sensitive issue, the project would be implemented with membership support. The idea had thus been born to establish a High-Level Advisory Group as a subsidiary body of the Governing Council, modelled on the format of similar bodies, such as the Advisory Group on Health. It was not a political body and would not conduct visits or work in the field, but rather would provide guidance for the development of workplans and budgets for the Secretariat and consultants to provide technical assistance to parliaments.

The decision to establish the High-Level Advisory Group had been taken by the Governing Council at its 201st session in St. Petersburg. Preliminary terms of reference had been approved by the Governing Council at that session. They had since been revised, and were currently before Council for consideration. A ceiling of 15 members had been proposed, to ensure that the Group remained a manageable size. The goal in respect of composition, as in the membership of the Advisory Group on Health, was not to ensure geopolitical balance, but rather to focus on technical expertise. That said, the IPU remained a political institution and the views of the broad membership should be reflected in the structures and work of its committees.

While a proposed membership list had been agreed in St. Petersburg, the Secretary General and President had been requested to conduct consultations with a view to improving the geopolitical and gender balance. Some changes had been made to the proposed composition as a result of those consultations, with the addition of a representative from Algeria for the Africa Group and one from Argentina for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean. It was the prerogative of the Council to decide how to establish the Advisory Group. Thus far, the Secretariat had implemented the decisions of the Governing Council adopted at its 201st session. If the Council wished to amend the procedures for the establishment of the Group, it could of course decide to do so at its next session. A clear decision must be made, however, as to whether the Group would be able to function in its current composition in the interim, since its next meeting was scheduled for early May 2018 and the Parliament in Abu Dhabi was making arrangements in that regard.

Mr. J. Whittingdale (United Kingdom) said that countering terrorism was an issue of the utmost importance. While he appreciated the background information provided by the Secretary General, IPU resolutions had not mandated the constitution or composition of the Advisory Group. In that regard, the United Kingdom shared the concerns expressed by the representatives of Australia, Canada and France. The costs of setting up and running the Advisory Group had been estimated at around US\$ 6 million. As yet it was not clear how those funds would be mobilized. His delegation therefore wished to formally express its reservations.

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia) said that the Governing Council had already discussed the establishment of the Advisory Group at its previous session in St. Petersburg. The Group must have geopolitical and gender balance in its composition. The work of the Group should not be brought to a halt simply because certain delegations were not represented. If the Governing Council felt the need to reopen consideration of the modalities of membership, that could be done at a future session. The Group must, however, be able to begin its work.

Ms. R. Alitwala Kadaga (Uganda), supported by **Mr. W. William (Seychelles)** and **Mr. J.F. Mudenda (Zimbabwe)**, said she agreed that the establishment of the Advisory Group was a very important matter. The lack of transparency in the selection of its membership was, however, very worrying. Better communication and a clear modus operandi in that regard were therefore essential. That said, the Group had been established by a decision of the Governing Council, which must not be casually overturned without a formal motion. It should therefore continue to function pending the revision of its Terms of Reference.

Mr. A.M. Oquaye (Ghana) said that while he agreed that the concerns raised by the representatives of Canada, France and the United Kingdom, among others, must be given due consideration in light of the enormous threat posed by terrorism the world over he also agreed that the work of the Advisory Group should not be brought to a halt.

Mr. A.S.M. Feroz (Bangladesh) said that terrorism was not only a matter of importance in Africa and the Middle East. It was the greatest threat to peace and democracy the world over.

The President took it that the Governing Council wished to revert the Advisory Group's Terms of Reference back to the Executive Committee for revision, for further consideration at the Council's next session in October 2018.

It was so agreed.

Mr. M. Timbine (Mali) said that in constituting the Advisory Group the overriding concern should be relevant experience, rather than geopolitical or gender balance. The experience of the countries of the Sahel was particularly significant. The downplaying of the degree of suffering in that region was very disappointing.

Mr. M. Kadam (Chad) said that the international community was not doing anything in this field and that he was not against the initiative but that more gender and geopolitical balance was needed in the Group, especially more representation from Africa.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) highlighted that if the HLAG was supposed to be a technical Group then the nationalities of the members should not matter. However, since all countries were affected by terrorism, all the geopolitical groups should be included.

The Secretary General replied that the Secretariat had taken good note of all the concerns raised, and of the decision to revert back to the Executive Committee to revise the Terms of Reference. Funding for the High-Level Advisory Group, as had been explained at the Governing Council's previous session, would be garnered through extrabudgetary resources. Those had been mobilized by partners, including the United Nations, and pledged by several national parliaments. The matter of securing further funding would be on the agenda for discussion at the Group's next meeting in Abu Dhabi, provided the Governing Council wished that meeting to go ahead. He asked whether the Council wished the Advisory Group to continue its project preparations and activities along the lines described by Ms. Kiener-Nellen, or whether its operations should cease altogether pending the revision of its Terms of Reference.

Mr. Y. Jabour (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that more transparent dialogue was needed. While everyone present agreed that the Advisory Group was necessary, and no-one was safe from terrorism, the Governing Council should be given the opportunity to consider and discuss in much greater detail all aspects of the establishment of the Advisory Group at its next session. The work of the Advisory Group should therefore be postponed.

The representative of the United Arab Emirates added that the Group had been established by decisions of the Governing Council and Executive Committee. That work should not be undone.

Ms. R. Alitwala Kadaga (Uganda) proposed that the Group continue its work and that the amendments be dealt with at a later stage.

Mr. I. Macdonald (Australia) concurred.

The President said that she took it that agreement had been reached on sending the HLAG's Terms of Reference back to the Executive Committee but a decision remained to be taken on whether the Group should be allowed to continue its activities.

Mr. A. Altarawneh (Jordan) said that the establishment of the High-Level Advisory Group demonstrated the IPU's commitment to fighting terrorism. No country's interests would be served by the Group losing momentum. It must be allowed to continue to function while its Terms of Reference were being revised.

The President said that while there was no doubt of each IPU Member Parliament's commitment to countering terrorism, it seemed that consensus would not be reached on whether the mandate of the Advisory Group should be suspended. She therefore proposed that the Governing Council vote on the matter, by show of hands, with one vote per delegation.

The Governing Council took note of the report, and decided, by 23 votes in favour and 17 against, that the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism would continue its work as initially mandated, pending the revision of its Terms of Reference by the Executive Committee.

Item 12 of the agenda

139th IPU ASSEMBLY (GENEVA, 14-18 OCTOBER 2018)

The Secretary General said that the next Assembly would take place in Geneva from 14 to 18 October 2018. The Executive Committee would meet on 12, 13 and 17 October, and the Governing Council would meet on 15 and 18 October. It was hoped that a workshop on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the chairpersons of parliamentary committees on foreign affairs, budget and finance, and SDGs, to be organized jointly with the United Nations Office at Geneva, would be held either the day before or the day after the Assembly. Further information would be forthcoming in due course.

Item 13 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS

(CL/202/13-P.1)

(a) Statutory meetings

The Secretary General announced that during the 138th IPU Assembly a host agreement had been concluded with the delegation of Argentina, pursuant to which the 140th Assembly would be held from 6 to 10 April 2019 in Buenos Aires. It was assumed that the 141st Assembly would be held from 13 to 17 October 2019 in Geneva, as was customary.

(b) Specialized meetings and other events

The Secretary General drew attention to the table of specialized meetings and events contained in document CL/202/13-P.1, and in particular to four events. The Parliament of Argentina had proposed that a parliamentary meeting should be held at the G20 Summit, on 1 and 2 November 2018, which would be funded from internal and external sources. The Parliament of Suriname had offered to host a regional workshop for parliaments that were not members of the IPU in the Caribbean in the context of the IPU's attempts to reach out to non-members and explain the benefits of IPU membership. A parliamentary meeting would be held at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in December 2018 in Krakow, Poland. The meeting would be funded, as was customary, from the regular budget. A regional workshop on parliamentary activity in the context of the World Trade Organization for English-speaking African parliaments, to be funded from extrabudgetary sources, would be held in Gabarone, Botswana. He also drew attention to the second regional seminar on the achievement of the SDGs for parliaments in the Asia-Pacific Region, which would take place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Lastly, the Parliament of Morocco had offered to host a parliamentary meeting at the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which would be held in Marrakesh in December 2018.

Mr. A. Touizi (Morocco) said that the parliamentary meeting due to take place in Morocco would afford an opportunity to further strengthen cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations at a key moment, when the global compact for migration would be secured. He encouraged as many parliaments as possible to take part. He hoped that the meeting could be organized at a convenient date that would not coincide with the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

The President said that the Secretariat would work with the Parliament of Morocco to identify appropriate dates for the meeting.

The Governing Council approved the list of specialized meetings and other events.

Appointment of two internal auditors for the 2018 accounts
(cf Rule 41 of the Governing Council)

The President announced that only one candidature, that of Mr. V. Macedo (Portugal), had been received for the position of internal auditor for the 2018 accounts. She encouraged others to consider putting themselves forward. She took it that the Council wished to appoint Mr. Macedo and would agree to appoint a second internal auditor at its next session.

It was so agreed.

The President expressed appreciation, on behalf of the whole Organization, for the work of the outgoing Internal Auditor, Mr. Krister Örnfjäder of Sweden, who had been a real IPU champion and had served in many capacities over the years.

Item 14 of the agenda

AMENDMENTS TO THE IPU STATUTES AND RULES
(CL/202/14-P.1.rev)

The President said that the Executive Committee had examined proposed amendments to the Statutes and Rules on enhancing youth participation at the IPU, as contained in document CL/202/14-P.1.rev, which it recommended for adoption.

The Governing Council approved the amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

Item 16 of the agenda

MISCELLANEOUS

The President said that she wished to acknowledge all IPU staff, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the smooth-running of IPU Assemblies and strengthen the Organization as a whole.

The Secretary General thanked the President for her recognition of the secretariat's dedication.

The President declared the 202nd session of the Governing Council closed.

The sitting rose at 6.20 p.m.