



Parliament of Australia

Parliamentary Delegation

to

131st Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

Geneva, Switzerland

and

Bilateral visit to European Parliaments and Institutions

4 – 16 October 2014

Commonwealth of Australia 2014

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Members of the Delegation

Leader of the Delegation

The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Federal Member for Mackellar
Liberal Party of Australia

Deputy Leader of the Delegation

Senator Glenn Sterle
Senator for Western Australia
Australian Labor Party

Ms Nola Marino MP
Member for Forrest, Western Australia
Liberal Party of Australia

Senator Cory Bernardi
Senator for South Australia
Liberal Party of Australia
(attended IPU Assembly only)

Mr Tony Zappia MP
Federal Member for Makin, South Australia
Australian Labor Party

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Mr Damien Jones
Chief of Staff to the Speaker of the House of Representatives

Mrs Talitha Try
Adviser to the Speaker of the House of Representatives

Mr Brien Hallett
Delegation Secretary

Visit to European Institutions and Parliaments

Between 4-10 October, the Australian Parliamentary Delegation visited various European Parliaments and institutions in Rome, Brussels (including West Flanders) and Vienna. The delegation was led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, and comprised Senator Glenn Sterle (Deputy Delegation Leader), Ms Nola Marino MP, and Mr Tony Zappia MP. Details of the various visits and meetings undertaken during this week are set out below.

Visit to Rome and the Holy See

The delegation arrived in Rome on 4 October and undertook a series of calls and meetings at the Holy See, the Italian Parliament and other agencies.

The main objectives of these visits was to strengthen relationships between the Australian and Italian parliaments and undertake meetings with a number of international organisations based in Rome which would inform policy debate in key areas. Following the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and the Holy See in 2013, the delegation also wished to foster this important relationship.

The bilateral relationships

There are long-standing and close ties between Australia and the Italian Republic as well as the Holy See. Nearly a million Australians claim Italian ancestry and while there is significant investment by Italian businesses in Australia – particularly in the area of infrastructure – there is scope to expand these commercial links.

While most people view the Holy See through a religious prism, it is also an effective nation state which holds a unique place in world affairs and should not be underestimated. One of the benefits of a healthy diplomatic relationship between Australia and the Holy See is the ability to raise issues of common

concern without some of the usual diplomatic implications. The upgrading of representation with a resident Ambassador has benefitted Australia's standing with the Holy See in areas of mutual concern, particularly in the areas such as human rights and good governance.

Visit to the Holy See

The delegation's arrival in Rome coincided with the commencement of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Accompanied by the Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr John McCarthy QC, the Speaker, Ms Marino and Mr Zappia attended the opening mass of the Synod celebrated by His Holiness, Pope Francis, on Sunday 5 October. Both before and after this service, the delegation met a number of senior church leaders including Patriarch Boutros al-Rahi, the Head of the Syriac Maronite Church of Antioch which has a number of followers in Australia.

This was a useful precursor to a call the next day on His Excellency, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with the States, (the equivalent of the Foreign Minister to the Holy See). The delegation discussed Australia's contribution to international efforts to combat terrorism and provide humanitarian assistance to people in Iraq and Syria affected by the ongoing violence. The delegation also extended an early welcome to Archbishop Mamberti who was expected to visit Australia in November 2014 at the invitation of the Australian Government and the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

During the visit to the Holy See, the delegation was hosted to lunch by His Eminence, Cardinal George Pell AC, Cardinal Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy and former Archbishop of Sydney. His Eminence outlined the steps that he is taking to renew governance arrangements for the financial base for the Holy See's operations and both sides discussed the strong bonds between the Holy See and Australia at both a religious, cultural and diplomatic level.

Although not in the Vatican, the delegation also toured Domus Australia, a guest house

for pilgrims in Rome operated by the Archdiocese of Sydney, as the guest of the Rector, Father Andrew James.



The delegation with the Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr John McCarthy QC

Visit to the Italian Parliament

The delegation visited the Italian Parliament on the afternoon of Monday 6 October and the Speaker paid a call on the Hon Laura Boldrini, Speaker of the Italian House of Representatives. The Speaker also met separately with Senator Pier Ferdinando Casini, an Honorary President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

On the same day the delegation met the Hon Antonio Martino MP, President of the Italian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Hon Marco Fedi who is the Italian Member of Parliament representing Italians living in Australia. At all these meetings, wide-ranging discussions covered the economic situation of both countries, particularly in relation to Italian investment in Australia and vice versa, and the demographic challenges facing both countries. The delegation was also interested to hear the views of Italian parliamentarians on the continuing contribution made to both countries by the Italian diaspora.

Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting

The Speaker attended the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP8) meeting in Rome from 6-7 October. The Assembly discussed *the role of Parliaments in fostering Europe-Asia dialogue, sustainable growth and stronger governance structures*. A further two panel discussions dealt with the important issues of *economic and financial government structures and sustainable growth and food security*.

During the ASEP8 meeting, the Speaker met and held discussions with Her Excellency, Mrs Solvita Aboltina, President of the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia.

At the same meeting, Mrs Bishop also met and held separate talks with Her Excellency, Ms Loreta Grauziniene, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

International Organisation of Migration

While the Speaker participated in the ASEP8 meeting, the rest of the Delegation visited the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) on 7 October. This mission of the the IOM in Italy has a co-ordinating role for the Mediterranean and the delegation received a briefing on IOM activities in assisting increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving on Italian territory from Northern Africa, particularly from Libya where border control is less stringent than in other areas. The delegation was interested to learn that due to its geography, southern Italy has become an entry-point to Europe, even though many of the arrivals do not wish to remain in Italy. Responding to this humanitarian crisis has placed challenges on resources and the various institutions of the Italian government. On the other hand, this unregulated migration is leading to a depletion of the youth cohort in some African countries which has long term demographic implications.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

The delegation visited the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations on 7 October which works to achieve food security so that all people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

As the guest of the Deputy Director-General for Operations, Mr Daniel Gustafson, the delegation participated in a panel discussion with various experts responsible for agriculture, fisheries, trade and markets and food safety. In his opening remarks, Mr Gustafson said that while FAO received many visits from technical experts, it did not often have the chance to welcome parliamentarians, so his organisation was particularly pleased to receive the Australian delegation. As two members of the delegation are members respectively of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry and the Senate Standing Committee on Rural, Regional Affairs and Transport, the delegation was able to discuss in detail issues associated with Australia's role as a food supplier on the global market, how international standards affect the competitiveness of Australian producers and some of the innovative research work being undertaken by Australian organisations such as the CSIRO to support global food production.

International Development Law Organisation (IDLO)

The International Development Law Organisation (IDLO) is an intergovernmental organisation which promotes the rule of law as a component of development. The delegation visited the IDLO headquarters in Rome on 7 October as the guest of the Director-General, Ms Irene Khan.

Ms Khan outlined the work of IDLO in capacity building in the 47 countries in which the organisation currently works, and talked in particular about nations such as Afghanistan, Myanmar and South Sudan. In view of the next visit that the delegation was scheduled

to make, there was particular interest in IDLO's work with the various food organisations, particularly in relation to rights to access land for agricultural purposes to produce food. The delegation was also interested in the working relationships between IDLO and several Australian universities as sources of expertise.

World Food Program (WFP)

The delegation's last visit in Rome on 7 October was to the World Food Programme (WFP) as the guest of the Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Governance Services, Ms Elisabeth Rasmusson. The World Food Program is the arm of the United Nations which provides food aid to improve the lives of people who due to poverty and/or crisis do not have access to enough food to obtain the sustenance to lead active and healthy lives. Ms Rasmusson acknowledged the excellent partnership that the World Food Programme has with Australia (which is due to take over the presidency of the executive board of that organisation this year).

The delegation was also provided with a briefing in the WFP operations room by Mr Ramior Lopes da Silva, the Executive Director, Operations Services. Mr da Silva explained that the WFP is facing an unprecedented number of level 3 – or worst case – situations where emergency food aid is required. In 2000, most issues being dealt with by the WFP were in response to natural disasters whereas by 2014 most crises were a combination of man-made situations and natural disasters. A case in point was the emerging outbreak of Ebola in western Africa which as well as being a medical emergency meant that people were unable to tend crops which in turn was leading to widespread hunger and the need for food aid.

Following the visit earlier in the day to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the delegation was particularly interested in the ways in which the Rome-based United Nations agencies are finding joint solutions to respond to emergencies and support recovery and development. In particular, the delegation

was impressed by the logistic capacity of the WFP to provide aid in areas difficult to access, often at short notice, and how it purchased commodities as closely as possible to the area of need. The WFP officials were particularly appreciative of Australia's significant financial contribution of more than \$1 billion over the past decade as well as the expertise and leadership that Australians bring to particular projects, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Visit to Belgium

The bilateral relationship

Australia enjoys productive relationships with both Belgium and the European Union. As a bloc, the latter is the largest world economy and Australia's second largest trading partner. Over the years, successive Australian parliamentary delegations have engaged in productive discussions with legislators and officials from various institutions based in Brussels and this delegation was keen to continue this dialogue.

European Council and Parliament

The delegation arrived in Brussels late in the evening of Tuesday 7 October and on the morning of Wednesday 8 October paid a call on the President of the European Council, Mr Herman Van Rompuy. The European Council comprises the heads of the various member states, and although it does not exercise a legislative function, defines the broad political direction of the European Union.

At this meeting the delegation discussed a range of issues including trade, the like-minded approach to a range of global issues including economic challenges and terrorism, and the protection and promotion of human rights.

Following this, the delegation attended the European Parliament where the Speaker presented to Vice President, Mrs Ildikó Pelczné Gáll, an Aboriginal artwork and a manuscript copy of the Apology made by the Australian Parliament to indigenous Australians in 2008. In discussions following

the presentation, the delegation was interested to hear Mrs Pelczné Gáll's perspectives on the new parliament following elections held in May 2014, and the process for selecting the new panel of commissioners.



Presentation by the Speaker to the European Parliament of an Aboriginal artwork and a copy of the manuscript of the Apology made by the Australian Parliament to indigenous Australians



The delegation on the floor of the European Parliament

The delegation then met with a number of members of the European parliament, including Mr Richard Ashworth (UK), who is a member of that parliament's Agriculture committee and Mr Axel Voss (Germany), first vice chair designate of the Delegation (ie committee) for Australia and New Zealand. The delegation also held talks with Mr Elmar Brok, the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee. A wide range of issues was discussed at these meetings including

progress towards a Framework Agreement which would cover joint commitment to co-operate across a wide range of areas including human rights, counter-terrorism, economic and trade issues and research, innovation and justice. The issue of agricultural subsidies was also raised and the delegation was interested to learn some of the background to the importance of agriculture in Europe and that subsidies are no longer provided for production.

The Australian delegation concluded the visit to the European Parliament by meeting with senior members of the Bureau of the European Parliament Delegation [ie committee] for Australia and New Zealand. Ms Rizian Beghin (Italy) who is the Chair designate, and the second vice chair designate, Ms Jacqueline Foster (UK), provided their perspectives on the role the parliament plays in key trade and economic negotiations and the changing face of the European Parliament following the elections held in May 2014.

That evening the delegation continued discussions with a number of members of the European and Belgian Parliaments at a function hosted by the Australian Ambassador, Dr Mark Higgie. This was an interesting time in Belgian politics as after protracted negotiations that had been underway since the general elections held in May, a new government had been formed earlier that day under the leadership of Mr Charles Michel.

Visit to West Flanders War Cemeteries

On Thursday 9 October, the delegation visited a number of sites associated with Australia's involvement in First World War battles on the Western Front.

The delegation visited the Tyne Cot Cemetery which is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery and laid a wreath at the Cross of Sacrifice. The delegation also laid commemorative crosses inscribed with messages from Australian school children at a number of individual graves. The delegation

then visited the Buttes New British Cemetery and memorial to the Australian Fifth Division at Polygon Wood before travelling to Ieper (Ypres) and visiting the Menin Gate Memorial to missing British and Commonwealth soldiers whose graves are unknown. In Ieper, the delegation met Mr Guy Gruwez, chairman of the Last Post Association which is responsible for playing the Last Post every evening at 8pm to honour the fallen soldiers who died in the area around Ieper during the Great War.



The delegation with Australian Ambassador, Dr Mark Higgie and staff at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Ieper

Visit to NATO headquarters

The last engagement in Brussels was a visit to NATO Headquarters where the delegation met with Mr James Appathurai, the Deputy Assistant Secretary General of NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, and separately, with Mr Lee Litzenberger, US Deputy Head of Mission to NATO.

This was a useful opportunity for the delegation to undertake discussions with senior NATO staff following Australia's new role as an enhanced NATO partner. The delegation was interested to learn of progress

that had been made in Afghanistan as the NATO involvement there draws to a close in 2014 as well as the situation in relation to emerging issues including the Ukraine and Syria and Iraq.

Visit to Vienna

The bilateral relationship

Australia has had links with Austria since the beginning of European settlement, and strong people-to-people links endure, particularly following post war migration to Australia. There are good business links between the two countries, particularly in the area of machinery, oil production, railway and communication systems. During its one-day visit to Vienna on 10 October, the delegation spent the morning visiting two United Nations agencies and then visited the Austrian Parliament in the afternoon.



The Delegation with Australian Ambassador, Mr David Stuart, at the Vienna International Centre prior to meetings with officials from the UNODC and IAEA.

Visit to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The delegation commenced its visit to the United Nations in Vienna on 10 October by attending a round-table discussion with senior representatives of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). This meeting discussed the use of the internet by organised crime figures and the challenges in achieving a balance between regulation and freedom on the web. The delegation was also interested

to learn that after decades fighting headline drugs such as heroin and cocaine, the impact of 'Ice' and new psychotropic drugs present fresh challenges to regulators. Related to this is the issue of ensuring that enforcement agencies are supported by adequate and up-to-date legislation, and the UNODC officials were interested to hear the perspectives of Australian legislators.

Visit to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Later that morning, the delegation visited the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which is an independent international organisation related to the United Nations system and which reports annually to the UN General Assembly. The IAEA works to ensure the safe and peaceful use of nuclear science and technology and undertakes monitoring to ensure that fissile material is not diverted from peaceful nuclear programs into the production of weapons. The delegation paid a call on the Director General, Mr Yukiya Amano, who provided an overview of the IAEA's work. Mr Amano explained that while attention is focussed on compliance monitoring, the agency also provides a strong safety framework for using nuclear energy and helps countries to use nuclear energy to promote sustainable development in areas such as agriculture, health, water resource management and industrial applications.

After meeting Mr Amano, the delegation participated in a panel discussion chaired by the IAEA's Head of Technical Co-operation, Mr Kwaku Aning, supported by various IAEA experts. This was a useful opportunity to explore further details of the agency's work, particularly through its technical co-operation program in areas such as the work undertaken using nuclear medicine in developing countries to eradicate cancer and to promote good nutrition. The delegation was interested to learn that the IAEA has regular contact with the Australian Nuclear, Science and Technology Organisation. In addition, it also maintains a long standing arrangement with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation in areas such as fruit

fly research and analysis of water in Australia's Great Artesian Basin, including interesting work into the age of the water, to check for contamination from practices such as fracking.

Visit to the Austrian Parliament

The delegation's final engagement in Vienna was a call on the Austrian Parliament on the afternoon of Friday 10 October. The delegation met with Mr Andreas Schieder, the Chair of the Parliamentary Group of the Social Democratic Party and four other parliamentarians who are members of that parliament's Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) group. This was a good opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest ahead of the IPU Assembly scheduled for the following week.

After a general discussion about the composition of the Austrian Parliament and the role that Austria plays as a leading investor in central and eastern Europe, the meeting discussed the situation on the border between Turkey and Syria, and the role that both countries were playing to help alleviate humanitarian issues. The delegation was pleased to see their Austrian colleagues at the IPU Assembly the following week in Geneva.

131st IPU Assembly – Geneva

The 131st Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly took place in Geneva from 12 to 16 October 2014 and was attended by 707 parliamentarians from 143 member countries including 95 presiding or deputy presiding officers. A number of observers also attended.

The Australian delegation to the Assembly was led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, and comprised Senator Glenn Sterle (Deputy Delegation Leader), Senator Cory Bernardi, Ms Nola Marino MP, and Mr Tony Zappia MP.

Background

The IPU is the international organisation of parliaments of sovereign states and provides a focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue. The IPU works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To achieve these aims the IPU:

- fosters contacts, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians for all countries;
- considers questions of international interest and concern;
- contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights; and
- contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

There are currently 166 national parliaments who are members of the IPU and ten regional parliamentary assemblies which are associate members.¹ Most members are affiliated with

¹ A list of current members of the IPU is available on the IPU website:
<http://www.ipu.org/english/membshp.htm>

one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.

While the major focus for the Australian delegation is participation in the twice-yearly assemblies, the IPU is constantly active in promoting democracy throughout the world. Its main areas of activity are:

- representative democracy;
- international peace and security;
- sustainable development;
- human rights and humanitarian law;
- women in politics; and
- education, science and culture.

The Australian Parliament plays an active role in supporting a number of these activities in partnership with the IPU, particularly in the local region.

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body of the IPU. It meets bi-annually to bring together parliamentarians to study international problems and make recommendations for action. The assemblies include debates on significant international issues, the regular meeting of the IPU Governing Council, and meetings of specialist committees, working groups and geopolitical groups.

Assembly

The 131st Assembly was formally opened on Monday 13 October 2014. The Assembly agenda addressed the following items:

- General Debate – *Achieving gender equality, ending violence against women*;
- debate on an Emergency Item;
- business of the four standing committees ;
- the 195th session of the IPU Governing Council; and
- the election of a new IPU President.

A key focus of the 131st Assembly was the election of the next IPU President. The Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, was one of four candidates who

nominated for this important role and details of the election, and the eventual outcome, are set out separately below.

Meetings of geopolitical groups

The IPU has six geopolitical groups that meet immediately prior to, and during, each Assembly to consider matters on the IPU Agenda and, where possible, agree a group position. Candidatures for positions on IPU committees are also considered and submitted through the geopolitical groups.

Most member countries are members of at least one geopolitical group. Australia is a member of two geopolitical groups: the Asia-Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group and participated in meetings of both groups at the 130th IPU Assembly.²

In addition to participation in the two geopolitical groups of which Australia is a member, the Speaker's candidacy for President of the IPU meant that she addressed all six groups and was questioned at length by various members about Australia's position on a range of policy issues. Because of this, the Australian delegation participated in a wider range of activities than usual at the 131st Assembly.

Asia-Pacific Group (APG)³

The Asia-Pacific Group met once during the Assembly and received a briefing by IPU executive committee members, and a report from the ASEAN +3 Group as well as considering the various topics proposed for debate as an emergency item by the Assembly. The meeting considered nominations for a number of vacancies to be filled during the 131st Assembly on several

² The IPU Statutes stipulate that Members that belong to more than one geopolitical group should indicate which geopolitical Group they represent for the purposes of submitting candidatures for positions within the IPU. Prior to the 131st Assembly commencing, Australia advised that it would seek nominations through the Asia-Pacific Group.

³ The membership of the Asia-Pacific Group is available on the IPU website:
<http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/geopol.htm>

Standing Committees and the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians. In addition, the meeting heard presentations from the four candidates who had nominated for the position of President of the IPU.

Twelve Plus Group⁴

The Twelve Plus Group met three times during the Assembly. The meeting received a report of the executive committee, a financial report and considered a wide range of nominations for a number of vacancies to be filled during the 131st Assembly. Reports were presented in relation to the work of various committees and the Group considered the various topics proposed for debate as an emergency item in the Assembly.

The meeting also heard presentations from the four candidates who had nominated for the position of President of the IPU.

Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

The 20th Meeting of Women Parliamentarians was held during the Assembly and the Speaker and Ms Marino were part of a total of 133 parliamentarians and 12 men from 86 parliaments who took part in proceedings.

During its meeting, the Group conducted a debate on electoral quotas for women, was presented with a copy of the *Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas* produced jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, International IDEA and Stockholm University, and discussed future strategies for forthcoming meetings of Women Parliamentarians. The Group agreed to mark its 30th anniversary at the 132nd Assembly in 2015 by launching a campaign to celebrate the role of women parliamentarians.

The Group discussed the third standing Committee's topic *International law as it relates to national sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and human rights* and proposed a number of

⁴ The membership of the Twelve Plus Group is available on the IPU website:
<http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/geopol.htm>

amendments which were presented to that Standing Committee. The Group then hosted a panel discussion on *The Influence of Women in Parliament* and later held a question and answer session with a member of the United Nations Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women.

The four candidates for the position of President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union gave presentations to the Group of Women Parliamentarians. In her presentation, the Speaker provided her perspective on being a female member of the Australian parliament and ministry and reminded delegates that no legislature can afford to ignore the talents of half its population. Mrs Bishop undertook to promote the rights of women if she was successful in her nomination for President.

General debate - *Achieving gender equality, ending violence against women*

Over three days, representatives of 116 Member Parliaments, four regional parliamentary organisations and five other Permanent Observers spoke on the theme of *Achieving gender equality, ending violence against women*.

The General Debate commenced with a video message from the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who applauded the IPU's focus on achieving gender equality and ending violence against women.

Representing the Australian delegation, the Speaker participated in the debate and in her address, discussed the importance of parliaments drawing on experience and knowledge from all citizens of their country, both men and women, and the necessity of women who are in higher positions to assist those aspiring to them. The Speaker spoke of looking forward to the day that parliaments no longer require quotas to elevate women to positions of power. In addition, the Speaker took the opportunity to thank the outgoing President of the IPU, President Radi, for his service to the organisation.

Standing Committees

The IPU has four standing committees that met during the Assembly to consider the following matters:

- *The role of parliaments in striking a balance between national security, human security and individual freedoms, and in averting the threat to democracy; and Cyber warfare – A serious threat to peace and global security* (First Standing Committee on International Peace and Security);
- *Shaping a new system of water governance: Promoting parliamentary action on water* (second Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade);
- *International law as it relates to national sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and human rights* (Third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights); and
- Interactive debates on (i) *the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order*; and (ii) *the question of corporate influence on UN decision-making* (Fourth Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs).

Committee on International Peace and Security

The First Standing Committee met twice during the Assembly and at its first meeting considered progress on the implementation of the 2008 IPU resolution on *The role of parliaments in striking a balance between national security, human security and individual freedoms, and in averting the threat to democracy*.

At its second meeting, the Committee conducted a panel discussion involving expert

speakers on *Cyber warfare – A serious threat to peace and global security*. This is the topic of a resolution for adoption by the 132nd IPU Assembly in Hanoi (Vietnam).

Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

The Second Standing Committee met twice during the Assembly and at its first meeting discussed the draft Outcome Document of the Parliamentary Meeting to be held in conjunction with the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Peru in December.

An interactive debate with private sector representatives was also held at this meeting which focused on corporate investment in sustainable development. This debate was organised jointly with the World Investment Forum of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

The World Investment Forum 2014 was also being held in the same week at the Palais des Nations in Geneva and the Speaker gave a brief presentation on investing in sustainable development to that conference.

At the second meeting, the Committee commenced a panel discussion of a proposed item to be adopted at the next IPU Assembly, *Shaping a new system of water governance: Promoting parliamentary action on water*. Among the panel of speakers, Ms Marino MP gave a presentation on the general situation with access to water in Australia; the impact of climate change on water availability; ensuring equitable access to water and the measures that the Australian Parliament has undertaken to support this effort. In her presentation, Ms Marino drew on examples from her own background as a farmer and parliamentarian to illustrate how local communities in Australia are dealing with water governance issues.

Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

The third standing committee on Democracy and Human Rights met three times during the Assembly and debated a draft resolution on *International law as it relates to national sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and human rights*.

After substantial work on amendments to the resolution in plenary, a drafting committee was established which worked through most of the textual changes before reporting back to the plenary. Due to the pressure of time, the Committee was unable to complete the draft resolution which will be finalised at the 132nd Assembly in 2015 in Hanoi.

The Committee agreed that the subject of the next resolution should be *Democracy in the digital era and the threat to privacy and individual freedoms*. The Committee also finalised agenda items for its work at the 132nd and 133^{ed} Assemblies.

Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

The fourth Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs met three times during the Assembly, during which time it hosted three interactive debates. At its first meeting, the Committee conducted an interactive debate with the United Nations Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Prof. A. de Zayas.

At its second meeting, the Committee held an interactive debate concerning the question of corporate influence on United Nations decision-making.

The Committee hosted the third interactive debate on the process in preparation for the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs. The Committee also agreed on two items for discussion at the 132nd Assembly.

Emergency Item

Prior to the deadline, a total of six topics had been proposed for debate as the emergency item. Following a roll-call in the Assembly, the joint proposal put forward by Belgium and Zambia received the required two-thirds majority support and was adopted for debate. This proposal for debate as an emergency item was as follows:

The role of parliaments in supporting an immediate and robust international response to the Ebola epidemic and in enacting laws ensuring an effective response to and preparedness for Ebola and other infectious disease outbreaks (Item 7)

Sixteen speakers participated in this debate on 14 October to support the need for urgent and co-ordinated action to address the threat raised by this epidemic. Contributors to the debate noted that the recent outbreaks had occurred in a number of poverty-stricken areas and they highlighted the need for a global response, both on the ground in assisting communities affected by the outbreak, and, in the longer term, to develop treatments which could contain and/or prevent the disease.

At the end of the debate, the emergency item was referred to a drafting committee which finalised a resolution that was unanimously adopted by the Assembly on 15 October.

Governing Council

The IPU Governing Council met on 13 and 16 October, considered the finance report and approved the consolidated budget for 2015; reviewed progress on the IPU Strategy for 2012-17 and considered reports from various specialised meetings.

In particular, on 13 October, the Speaker tabled the Report of the Parliamentary Meeting at the 20th International AIDS Conference held in Melbourne on 21 July 2014. This meeting provided members of parliament with an update on issues related to the HIV epidemic, reviewed progress made at a global level in the HIV responses and

served as a forum for an exchange of views on major issues affecting the AIDS response.

Election of the IPU President

A key activity of the Governing Council was the election of a new President to replace Mr Abdelwahad Radi whose term came to an end on 16 October 2014 (and who was subsequently appointed as an Honorary President of the IPU).

A total of four candidates nominated for this important role, including the Speaker, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP. The other candidates were Ms. N. Ali Assegaf (Indonesia), Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh) and Mr. A. Shahid (Maldives).

In the days leading up to the ballot, the Speaker and other candidates were each invited to make presentations to all the geopolitical groups and other meetings as follows:

- Twelve Plus Group
- Asia-Pacific Group
- African Group
- Arab Group
- Eurasia Group
- Group of Latin America and the Caribbean
- Meeting of Women Parliamentarians
- Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU

Furthermore, in the various bilateral meetings, presiding officers and parliamentarians from a range of delegations were interested to discuss Mrs Bishop's vision for the IPU as well as other policy issues.

The Speaker's candidacy meant that at this Assembly, Mrs Bishop addressed more groups, and the delegation participated in a wider range of discussions, than usual.

On Thursday 16 October, each candidate addressed the Governing Council before the ballot commenced. Under the IPU rules, a candidate is required to obtain an absolute majority of valid votes to be elected, (ie 50% of the votes plus one vote). If no candidate

receives an absolute majority in the first round of voting, the candidate with the least support is eliminated and a second round is conducted.

In the first round of voting, a total of 340 votes were cast as follows:

- Bangladesh 108
- Australia 99
- Indonesia 76
- Maldives 57

As no candidate gained the required majority of 171 votes, the candidate from the Maldives was excluded.

In the second round of voting, a total of 321 votes were cast and Mr Chowdhury (Bangladesh) obtained 169 which exceeded the required majority of 162. Mrs Bishop obtained 95 votes and Ms Assegaf (Indonesia) obtained 57 votes.

This was the first time that an Australian parliamentarian had stood for this office and in both rounds of voting, Mrs Bishop achieved the second highest number of votes. It is also of interest that 19 fewer votes were cast in the second round. It appears that the first round votes that had originally been allocated to Mr Shahid from the Maldives may have supported Mr Chowdhury in the final, and decisive, round. At the declaration of the results, Speaker Bishop was one of the first delegates to congratulate President-elect Chowdhury.



The Speaker addressing the IPU Assembly before the presidential ballot

Bilateral meetings

A key benefit of attending the IPU Assembly is the opportunity for Australian parliamentarians to meet their international colleagues in both formal and informal settings. By assembling representatives from such a large number and diverse range of parliaments in one place, the IPU offers a unique opportunity for delegations and individual parliamentarians to meet to discuss issues of mutual interest, to develop an understanding of different parliamentary models and to strengthen parliament-to-parliament relationships.

In addition to a wide range of informal contacts while the proceedings of the IPU were in session, the Speaker and delegation held a number of formal meetings as follows:

The Speaker met the following high level representatives:

- Speaker Ilir Meta (Albania)
- IPU Secretary-General Martin Chungong
- Retiring IPU President Abdelwahad Radi
- Deputy Speaker Eduard Sharmzanov (Armenia)
- Speaker Norbert Lammert (Germany)
- Deputy Speaker Mensah-Williams (Namibia)

In addition, the Australian delegation also held meetings with:

- Argentinean Delegation
- French Delegation
- Iraqi Delegation
- Japanese Delegation
- Ugandan Delegation
- United Kingdom Delegation

A wide range of topics was covered at each of these meetings. As stated above, the Speaker's vision for the IPU was a major topic of discussion at each meeting. In addition, a wide range of policy areas were covered including global security in light of developments in the Ukraine and Syria and

Iraq; the Ebola crisis; opportunities for trade and development; and Australia's role as provider of education and skills training.

Each of these bilateral meetings also allowed the delegation to discuss key themes under consideration at the Assembly and contribute to the strengthening of bilateral and parliament to parliament relationships. The delegation noted the important role such meetings play in supporting and enhancing more formal bilateral relationships at a government-to-government level, particularly as such meetings tend to permit more free-ranging and candid discussions.

These discussions continued at a function hosted in honour of the Speaker by the Australian Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador John Quinn, on the evening of 14 October at the Australian Permanent Mission in Geneva. This function was well attended by a large number of IPU delegates and senior IPU officials.

Meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

Introduction

Ms Claressa Surtees, Deputy Clerk of the House of Representatives, attended the meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) held in conjunction with the deliberations of the 131st IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland. The meetings of the ASGP were held from 13 to 16 October 2014. Ms Surtees was admitted as a new member of the ASGP and played a full role in relation to meetings, discussions and deliberations.

Relations between the ASGP and the IPU

Ms Kareen Jabre and Ms Norah Babic, of the IPU Secretariat, reported on a range of activities being supported in relation to the IPU's priority areas of capacity building, gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. They referred to the important role that members of the ASGP play in

achieving these priorities and expressed thanks for the support provided over the past year.

Consideration of parliamentary matters

General debates

The general meetings of the ASGP continued the format of selected general thematic debates. The chosen subjects for this session were:

- The legislature and the judiciary: a balance of power; and
- Why have a parliamentary television channel?

Communications

There were also presentations and discussions on specific parliamentary topics:

- Public access to records of committee meetings – a case study from Estonia;
- Open National Assembly: a legislative support system designed to enhance communication with citizens, and to facilitate the identification of legislative needs;
- Balancing freedom of speech in Parliament and the right of every person to protection under the Constitution: a Zimbabwean experience;
- Establishing a new House of Parliament – the Kenyan experience;
- The management of a multilingual Parliament: the Swiss example;
- Parliamentary terminology: creating a terminology and textual database at the Portuguese Parliament;
- The reaction of the media to parliamentary transparency: Hellenic Parliament;
- Strategic and annual planning in Parliaments – challenges and outcomes in the Parliament of Montenegro; and
- A second debating chamber of the Australian House of Representatives: 20 years on.

Informal discussions

Informal discussions, in language groups, again took place. The general topic was the co-ordination of assistance and support to Parliaments. In the English language group, the use of AGORA, the multilateral knowledge sharing platform supporting parliamentary development, was especially considered, as were the needs of the countries sharing in the assistance experiences. Following these discussions the groups reported back to the plenary.

There was a further consideration of the Common Principles for Parliamentary Development, on which Mr David Elder, Clerk of the House, had provided feedback prior to a workshop conducted in August 2014 in Manila, Philippines.

Other presentations

The final presentation addressed the next session in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Administrative matters**New members**

A number of new members were admitted to the ASGP, most were replacing the previous members who had retired or moved to other employment. In addition, one new associate member from the Inter-parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) was admitted, replacing the previous member.

Draft budget for 2015

The budget remains sound, and modest, reflecting levels experienced in recent years. It was noted that one area of savings since 2013 is realised because the half yearly Review of the ASGP, *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information*, is distributed to members electronically and is no longer printed in hard copy and mailed.

Elections for members of the Executive Committee

Nominations for the posts of President, one Vice President and one ordinary member of the Executive Committee were invited during the course of the meetings. As only one

member nominated to each of the vacant posts, the nominees were declared elected: Mrs Doris Katai Kateba Mwinga, Clerk of the National Assembly of Zambia, was elected President; Mr Geert Jan Hamilton, Clerk of the Senate of the States General of the Netherlands, was elected Vice President; and Mr Najib El Khadi, Secretary General of the Chamber of Representatives of Morocco, was elected to the Executive Committee.

Next meetings

A draft agenda for the next session, from 29 March to 1 April 2015 in Hanoi, was circulated. When further developed it is to be placed on the ASGP website.

<http://www.asgp.co/>

Conclusion

This was a busy and productive delegation which built upon the achievements of previous parliamentary visits to European Parliaments and Institutions, and attendance at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly.

In wide-ranging and informative discussions, the Australian Delegation appreciated the opportunity for frank exchanges of viewpoints and perspectives, and the generous spirit in which fellow parliamentarians and officials shared their experience and expertise. In all cases, our delegation stressed the importance of Europe to modern-day Australia in terms of trade, global security, humanitarian aid, cultural exchange, and personal connections. Australia may be a long way from Europe, but we do not have to choose between our history and our geography as there are still very strong connections which this delegation continued to foster.

The 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union was once again a valuable opportunity to meet a wide range of fellow parliamentarians from 143 member countries at both a formal and informal level.

Australia's candidacy for the position of President of the IPU provided a useful platform to present our views and engage in discussion on various policy matters with

every geopolitical group, in bilateral meetings and with other groups at this important gathering of parliamentarians. This was the first time that an Australian candidate stood for a role such as this in the IPU and the number of votes achieved in both rounds of polling showed that there was significant support for Australia and recognition of our long standing contribution to the IPU. The Australian National Group of the IPU congratulates the new IPU President, Mr Saber Chowdhury, and looks forward to working with him in his new role.

Finally, the delegation acknowledges the support provided by the Australian Ambassadors to the Holy See (HE Mr John McCarthy QC), Italy (HE the Hon Mike Rann), Belgium, Luxembourg, the European Union and NATO (HE Dr Mark Higgie), and Austria (HE Mr David Stuart) and their respective staff for their assistance in the planning and conduct of the bilateral visits.

Australia's Permanent Mission in Geneva also contributed significantly to the success of the delegation's attendance at the IPU Assembly. The delegation is grateful to Australia's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, HE Mr John Quinn, and Australia's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organisation, HE Mr Hamish McCormick, for the time they devoted to the delegation's visit. Particular thanks are also due to Ms Jeffie Kaine at the post in Geneva for the advice and practical assistance she provided to the delegation in the lead-up to and throughout the Assembly.

Bronwyn Bishop MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Programs

Visit to Rome and the Holy See

4 - 7 October 2014

The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, Senator Glenn Sterle, Ms Nola Marino MP, Mr Tony Zappia MP

Arrive Rome

Briefing and Dinner hosted by the Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, HE Mr John McCarthy QC

Sunday 5 October 2014

Attendance at opening mass for the Synod of Bishops, St Peter's Basilica

Meeting with Patriarch Boutros al-Rahi, Primate of the Syriac Maronite Church

Monday 6 October 2014

Briefing by HE the Hon Mike Rann, Australian Ambassador to Italy

Meeting between Mrs Bishop and Senator Pier Ferdinando Casini

Tour of Domus Australia

Meeting with HE Archbishop Dominique Mamberti (Secretary for Relation with States)

Lunch hosted by His Eminence Cardinal George Pell AC (Cardinal-Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy)

Meeting with the Hon Antonio Martino MP (President of the Italian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union) and the Hon Marco Fedi MP (Italian Member of Parliament representing Italians living in Australia)

Meeting between Mrs Bishop and the Hon Laura Boldrini (Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies)

Meeting of the Drafting Committee on the declaration of the 8th Asia/Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting

Tuesday 7 October 2014

Mrs Bishop attends 8th Asia/Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting

Senator Sterle, Ms Marino and Mr Zappia visit the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Meeting between Mrs Bishop and HE Ms Loreta Grauziniene (Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania)

Meeting between Mrs Bishop and HE Mrs Solvita Aboltina, President of the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia

Senator Sterle, Ms Marino and Mr Zappia visit the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

Senator Sterle, Ms Marino and Mr Zappia visit Eataly

Senator Sterle, Ms Marino and Mr Zappia visit the International Development Law Organisation (IDLO)

Senator Sterle, Ms Marino and Mr Zappia visit the World Food Program (WFP)

Depart Rome for Brussels

Visit to Brussels and West Flanders

Tuesday 7 October 2014

Arrive Brussels

Wednesday 8 October 2014

Meeting with Mr Herman Van Rompuy (President of the European Council)

Briefing by HE Dr Mark Higgie, Australian Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, the European Union and NATO

Visit to the European Parliament:

- Meeting with Mr Richard Ashworth MEP (UK, European Conservatives and Reformists)
- Meeting with Mrs Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, (Vice-President of the European Parliament Hungary, EPP)
- Presentation to the European Parliament of Aboriginal artwork and manuscript of the Apology to Indigenous Australians
- Lunch with members of the European Parliament
- Meeting with Mr Elmar Brok (Germany, European People's Party), Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee
- Meeting with the Bureau of the European Parliament Delegation for Australia and New Zealand:
 - Chair-designate Ms Tiziana Beghin (Italy, Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group)
 - Second Vice Chair-designate Ms Jacqueline Foster (UK, European Conservatives and Reformists)
- Dinner hosted by Ambassador Higgie with members of the European and Belgian Parliaments

Thursday 9 October 2014

Visit to Tyne Cot cemetery and Interpretation Centre; wreath laying

Visit to Polygon Wood, Butte New British cemetery and the Australian Fifth Division memorial

Visit to Ieper and tour of the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing

Lunch in Ieper hosted by Ambassador Higgie with Mr Guy Gruwez, (former Chairman of the Last Post Association)

Visit to NATO Headquarters:

- Meeting with Mr James Appathurai, Deputy Assistant Secretary General of NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division

- Meeting with Mr Lee Litzenberger, US Deputy Head of Mission to NATO

Depart Brussels for Vienna

Visit to Vienna

Thursday 9 October 2014

Arrive Vienna

Friday 10 October 2014

Briefing by the Australian Ambassador to Austria, HE Mr David Stuart

Meeting with UN Office on Drugs and Crime including:

- Director, Division for Operations, Mr Aldo Lale Demoz
- Director, Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, Mr Jean-Luc Lemahieu

Meeting with Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mr Yukiya Amano

Roundtable with IAEA senior representatives on nuclear safeguards, applications and technical cooperation, led by:

- Deputy Director General, Technical Cooperation, Mr Kwaku Aning
- Deputy Director General, Nuclear Sciences and Applications, Mr Aldo Malavasi

Visit to Parliament House:

- Meeting with Austrian members of parliament and IPU delegation members including:
 - Mr Andreas Schieder (Chair, Parliamentary Group of the Social Democratic Party)
 - Dr Reinhold Lopatka (Chair, Parliamentary Group of the People's Party)
 - Dr Andreas Karlsböck (Chair, Bilateral Parliamentary Group Austria, South and Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand)
- Tour of Parliament House

Depart Vienna for Geneva

Attendance at the 131st IPU Assembly

10 - 17 October 2014

The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, Senator Glenn Sterle, Ms Nola Marino MP, Mr Tony Zappia MP and Senator Cory Bernardi

Friday 10 October 2014

Arrive Geneva

Saturday 11 October 2014

Briefing by HE Mr John Quinn, Australian Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and HE Mr Hamish McCormick, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO in Switzerland

Registration

Presentation by the Speaker to the Latin American and Caribbean Geopolitical Group

Dinner for the Speaker hosted by Australian Ambassador, HE Mr John Quinn and Mrs Quinn

Sunday 12 October 2014

Meeting of Women Parliamentarians (including address by the Speaker)

Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Geopolitical Group (including address by the Speaker)

Meeting of the Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group (including address by the Speaker)

Presentation by the Speaker to the Arab Group

Meeting with German Speaker, Dr Lammert

Presentation by the Speaker to the African Geopolitical Group

Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group buffet dinner

Monday 13 October 2014

Governing Council

Tabling by the Speaker of the Report of the Parliamentary Meeting at the XX International AIDS Conference held in Melbourne on 21 July 2014

Meeting with the Albanian Speaker, Mr Meta

Presentation by the Speaker to the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU

Assembly: Start of the General Debate

Meeting with the UK Delegation

Meeting between the Speaker and IPU Secretary-General

Meeting with the Iraqi Delegation

Meeting between the Speaker and outgoing IPU President, Mr Abdelwahad Radi

Meeting with Armenian Speaker, Mr Sharmzanov

Meeting with the Ugandan Delegation

Reception hosted by the Indonesian Delegation

Tuesday 14 October 2014

Assembly

Meeting with the Argentinean Delegation

Meeting with the French Delegation

Meeting of the Bureau of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Meeting with the Japanese Delegation

Assembly

Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Presentation by the Speaker to the Eurasian Geopolitical Group

Reception hosted by Ambassador Quinn

Wednesday 15 October 2014

Assembly – conclusion of the general debate and adoption of the emergency item

Address by the Speaker to the World Investment Forum

Meeting with Namibian Deputy Speaker, Ms Mensah Williams

Presentation by Ms Marino as part of a panel discussion on water conducted by the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Thursday 16 October 2014

Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group

Governing Council – election of IPU President

Assembly

Friday 17 October 2014

Departure from Geneva for Australia

