
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

123rd Inter-Parliamentary Union
Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland)
and meetings with International
Organisations (Paris, France)

Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation

1 to 11 October 2010

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Preface

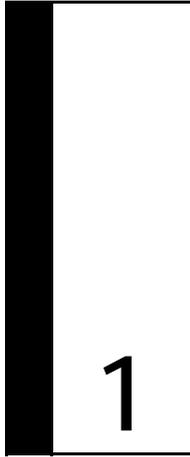
From 1 to 11 October 2010, an Australian parliamentary delegation attended the 123rd Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, and undertook a series of meetings with some of the international organisations based in Paris, France. The delegation was led by Senator Michael Forshaw, and included Senator the Hon Judith Troeth (Deputy Leader), Senator Trish Crossin, and Mr Patrick Secker MP.

This report outlines the work undertaken by the delegation at the 123rd Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly and the delegation's observations from a series of meetings with some of the international organisations based in Paris. Attending the assembly allowed the delegation to engage on issues of significance to Australia, and to engage more broadly with parliamentary counterparts from other countries. The meetings with the international organisations allowed the delegation the opportunity to be informed on a range of global issues that have relevance to Australia.

The delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the work undertaken by the Australian Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva, and the Australian Embassy in Paris, in support of the delegation.

Particular thanks are due to Dr Miranda Brown (Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Geneva), Dr Neil McFarlane (AusAID Counsellor, Geneva) and Ms Lisa Mittelman (Australian Embassy, Paris).

The delegation is grateful for the support provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Parliamentary Library and the International and Community Relations Office. The support of all of these organisations was greatly appreciated and played a significant role in the success of the delegation.



Inter-Parliamentary Union

IPU Council and Assembly

- 1.1 The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organisation of parliaments, providing a focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue. It currently comprises 157 member parliaments and nine associate members.
- 1.2 At its Assemblies, which are held twice a year, members of national delegations participate in the following:
 - The Assembly itself, being a focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue on political, economic, social and cultural issues of international significance;
 - The Inter-Parliamentary Council, comprising three delegates from each affiliated group, and;
 - Specialist committees established by the IPU and specific meetings such as the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.
- 1.3 A 17 member Executive Committee advises the IPU and supervises its annual program and budget.

Geo-political group meetings

- 1.4 The Rules of the IPU specifically recognise the role and function of the geo-political groups. These groups are Africa, Arab, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia, Latin America and Twelve Plus.
- 1.5 The Australian delegation participates in the meetings of the Twelve Plus Group (the geo-political group originally centred on membership of the European Union, but now including several other countries, and also the Asia-Pacific Group. In accordance with the Rules, the Australian National

Group of the IPU has resolved that it will seek election to any position in the IPU through its membership of the Asia-Pacific Group. This also includes membership of any drafting committees, and specifically, the Executive Committee of the IPU.

- 1.6 The meetings of the Twelve Plus and Asia-Pacific groups foster multilateral contact and provide the delegation with an important opportunity to put its point of view in a relatively informal atmosphere, and to cement friendships with other countries.

Membership of the Union

- 1.7 The 157 members of the IPU are as follows:

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

- 1.8 There are nine associate members of the IPU are as follows;

Andean Parliament, Central American Parliament, East African Legislative Assembly, European Parliament, Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, Latin

American Parliament, Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Transitional Arab Parliament.

Delegation report

- 1.9 This report is based on the official Results of Proceedings of the 123rd IPU Assembly in Geneva - 2010, produced by the IPU Secretariat.
- 1.10 This report provides details of the meetings and activities in which the Australian parliamentary delegation to the IPU participated. The complete documents from the assembly and related meetings are available from the IPU's website at: www.ipu.org



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123rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Agenda of the Assembly

- 2.1 The agenda of the Assembly was as follows:
1. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the 123rd Assembly
 2. Consideration of possible requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda
 3. Panel discussions on the subject items chosen for debate during the 124th Assembly (Panama City, 15-20 April 2011)
 - (a) Providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power
(First Standing Committee)
 - (b) The role of parliaments in ensuring sustainable development through the management of natural resources, agricultural production and demographic change
(Second Standing Committee)
 - (c) Transparency and accountability in the funding of political parties and election campaigns
(Third standing Committee)
 4. Report of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs
 5. Amendments to the Statutes and Rules of the IPU
 6. Immediate action to support international relief efforts in response to natural disasters, in particular with regard to flood-stricken Pakistan

Opening of the Assembly and Election of the President

2.2 123rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union opened its proceedings at the Geneva International Conference Centre on the morning of Monday 4 October 2010. The President of the IPU, Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, welcomed the participants and declared the Assembly officially open. He was subsequently elected President of the Assembly and the Vice-Presidents of the IPU Vice-Presidents of the Assembly.

2.3 At the Opening, the Assembly endorsed a statement made by the President of the Assembly on the recent events in Ecuador. In his statement, the President said "I know that, like me, you have been watching the events in Ecuador with some consternation over recent days. I would like to state in the most unequivocal terms before this Assembly, and I believe I can say this on behalf of us all, that the IPU condemns the use of force against President Rafael Correa and wholeheartedly repudiates the recent threat to subvert constitutional order in the country. We reiterate our support for and defence of the institution of parliament. The subversion of constitutional democracy and the defiance of the rule of law, which in this case has resulted in tragic loss of life, can never be condoned."

2.4 Delegations from the following 118 parliaments attended the 123rd Assembly:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

- 2.4 The following Associate Members also attended the Assembly:
East African Legislative Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, and the Transitional Arab Parliament.
- 2.5 Observers included representatives of:
- (i) the United Nations system: United Nations – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), - International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and World Trade Organisation (WTO).
 - (ii) International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and League of Arab States.
 - (iii) African Parliamentary Union (APU), Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU), Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU), Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA), Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA), Baltic Assembly, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Confederation of Parliaments of the Americas (COPA), Inter-Parliamentary Commission of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), Maghreb Consultative Council, Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries (TURKPA), Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Member States (PUOICM)
 - (iv) Socialist International
 - (v) International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). Organisations having requested Observer status: Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC).

- 2.6 Of the 1,023 delegates who attended the Assembly, 460 were members of parliament. The parliamentarians included 22 Speakers, 39 Deputy Speakers and 148 women parliamentarians (32%).

Choice of an Emergency Item (Agenda item 2)

- 2.7 The Assembly had before it two requests for the inclusion of an emergency item: one submitted by the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, entitled *The importance of international inter-parliamentary cooperation for natural disaster response, in particular with regard to relief aid to flood-stricken Pakistan*, and another, presented by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, entitled *The urgent need for immediate action by the IPU and its Member Parliaments to encourage international relief efforts in flood-stricken Pakistan*. Considering that both proposals referred to the same situation, at the President's suggestion, the Assembly decided to combine both proposals under the title *Immediate action to support international relief efforts in response to natural disasters, in particular with regard to flood-stricken Pakistan*. The proposal was adopted by acclamation and added to the agenda as Item 6.

Panel Discussions (Agenda item 3)

- 2.8 Three panel discussions were held as follows:

Panel discussion: (First Standing Committee subject item at the 124th Assembly):

Providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring a smooth transition of power

- 2.9 The panel discussion took place in the morning of 5 October. It was chaired by Mr T. Boa (Cote d'Ivoire), President of the standing Committee on Peace and International Security. Mr W. Madzimore (Zimbabwe) presented the draft report by the co-Rapporteurs in the absence of Mr J.D. Seelam (India). The draft report focused on the elements of a sound legal framework, the causes of electoral violence and the role and responsibility of parliaments and parliamentarians.
- 2.10 Participants also heard keynote presentations from Mr N. Kaczorowski, Head, Election Department, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and Mr A. Bradley, Director of Global Programmes, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). They stated that a sound legal framework for free and fair elections encompassed a wide range of elements, ranging from the choice of electoral system to the creation of appropriate dispute-settlement mechanisms.

- 2.11 Forty-four legislators from as many parliaments took part in the ensuing debate. They noted that at election time, when the stakes were particularly high, the struggle for power sometimes took violent forms. Violence occurred in particular when politics was seen as a zero-sum game. Electoral violence was a reflection of the ability of the political system to manage the tension between the competing interests of society. Women were disproportionately affected by electoral violence: women candidates were often vulnerable targets and were deterred from participating in the political process by a climate of intimidation.
- 2.12 A number of factors were identified that could contribute to, or mitigate, the risk of electoral violence, not least voter education. Citizens needed to understand the political process in order to be able to participate effectively. Greater knowledge of the purpose of elections, the place of parliament and the role of political parties in a democratic system of governance contributed to a health political environment. The ultimate test of an election was whether or not the results were acceptable to citizens. The perception of an uneven playing field or manipulated election results heightened the risk of violence.
- 2.13 The independence of the national electoral commission, which managed the entire electoral process, was seen by several participants as a sine qua non for a free and fair election. The impartiality of the judiciary and the security forces was also crucial. The State administration, at all levels, must respect neutrality throughout the electoral process.
- 2.14 Political parties and individual candidates were largely responsible for fostering a climate of political tolerance. In many countries, parties were required to sign a code of conduct for the electoral period. Respect for political opponents and intra-party democracy helped lower the risk of violence.
- 2.15 Election observation by national and international observers could play a significant role in building confidence in the electoral process. To be effective, observation must take place over the entire electoral cycle, not just on polling day. More work was required to develop standards for observation of the post-election phase, including the announcement of election results and the management of legal challenges thereto.
- 2.16 Senators Forshaw and Crossin participated in the panel discussion.

Panel discussion: (Second Standing Committee subject item at the 124th Assembly):

The role of parliaments in ensuring sustainable development through the management of natural resources, agricultural production and demographic change

- 2.17 The panel discussion took place in the afternoon of 5 October with Mr P. Martin-Lalande (France), President of the Second Standing Committee, in the Chair. One of the two co-Rapporteurs appointed by the 122nd Assembly, Mr A. Cherrar (Algeria), was in attendance. The other, Ms K.G. Ferrier (Netherlands), had been prevented from attending. She was replaced at the session by her parliamentary colleague, Mr K. Putters, who complemented Mr Cherrar's presentation of the draft report that had been jointly prepared by the co-rapporteurs.
- 2.18 Given the exceptionally broad scope of the subject, Mr U. Hoffmann, of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), was invited to provide a comprehensive scientific overview of the problem of managing the earth's resources. He focused on why agriculture was so important for both developed and developing countries and what policy changes were required in the light of global warming.
- 2.19 Following the three introductory statements, an exchange of views took place, with a total of 36 delegates taking the floor, one third of whom were women.
- 2.20 The delegates agreed that there was good reason to feel concerned over the question of how to feed the planet's growing population, provide it with sustainable living conditions and manage its natural resources in a responsible way. It was vital to adopt an integrated and proactive approach. The discussion focused on a number of interrelated policy areas identified in the draft report as being of primary importance for achieving that objective.
- 2.21 Both the draft report and the panel discussion served as reminders that, together with governments, management agencies and private stakeholders, legislators were largely responsible for putting in place and implementing sustainable development policies.
- 2.22 Mr Secker participated in the panel discussion

Panel discussion: (Third Standing Committee subject item at the 124th Assembly):

Transparency and accountability in political party funding

- 2.23 The panel discussion took place in the afternoon of 5 October with Mr J.C. Mahia (Uruguay), President of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, in the chair. The President pointed out that Mr A. Destexhe (Belgium), who had been appointed one of the co-Rapporteurs at the 122nd Assembly in Bangkok, was no longer a member of parliament, and had therefore been replaced by Mr P. Moriau (Belgium). The latter, together with Ms. M. Kubayi (South Africa), the other co-Rapporteur, presented their draft reports. They said that they intended to present a unified report following the panel discussion and asked participants to make contributions that would enrich the report and the future draft resolution. The participants heard a presentation by Mr. A. Bradley, Director of Global Programmes, International IDEA. Thirty-two delegates took the floor during the debate.
- 2.24 Political parties played an important role in the political process. They helped articulate the wishes of the people and transform them into policies and actions that respond to those wishes. As key instruments in the democratic sphere, therefore, they needed resources to function properly. Those resources could come from both public and private sources. Participants provided examples of how political parties were funded in their countries and mechanisms that had been put in place to ensure their responsible use. It was clear from the discussions that many countries provided for public funding of political parties. Such funding could be direct in the form of subsidies allocated by the State, most often taking into account the representatives of the parties based on their electoral weight. Indirect funding included the allocation of airtime on State-owned media to parties to express their views. Other mechanisms included tax deductions
- 2.25 Participants recognised the importance of private funding for political parties. However, many delegates expressed concern that a part of such funding could come from dubious sources. In many countries, the authorities had to deal with money laundering, drug money and money obtained from other criminal and illegal activities. Delegates insisted that such money should not find its way into the political process as it could be used to undermine democracy. Discussions also focussed on the negative role that some non-governmental (NGOs) and large corporate entities could play by unduly influencing the political process and decision-making through generous funding of political parties. There were divergent views on the judiciousness of allowing funding from foreign sources but broad agreement that where such funding was allowed, measures should be taken

to ensure that it was not used to unduly influence or subvert political and other outcomes in the countries of the recipient parties.

- 2.26 Given that the purpose of public funding was to set a level playing field for all actors in the political process, special attention should be paid to women and the creation of conditions that would allow them to compete on an equal footing with men.
- 2.27 Participants underscored the importance of setting guidelines to foster transparency and accountability, key precepts of democracy. Reference was made to limiting the amount of funding that could be received from various sources, the need for parties to disclose the sources and extent of funding they received and to report on how those funds were utilised, in particular when the funding came from public sources.
- 2.28 As for mechanisms for sanctioning violations of funding regulations, participants were divided between instituting stringent punitive measures for defaulting parties and establishing self-regulatory mechanisms, including codes of conduct and integrity for political parties.
- 2.29 In any case, funding to political parties should aim primarily to give a voice to the people in the political and democratic process rather than subvert their will. Parliaments, together with NGOs and the media, could play a key role in building a culture of transparency and responsibility in political life.
- 2.30 The resolution to be adopted at the 124th Assembly in Panama should reflect those concerns and identify mechanisms that the IPU could institute to help parliaments ensure transparency and accountability. Such mechanisms should take into account the prevailing realities in the different countries rather than seek a one-size-fits-all approach.
- 2.31 Senator Troeth participated in the panel discussion.

Report of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

- 2.32 The committee met from 4 to 6 October 2010. It was briefed by the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, on the outcome of the recent UN Summit on the MDGs. He focused in particular on the section, "The Way Forward", which identified the steps that still needed to be taken to achieve all the MDGs. It was considered that gender equality had the largest multiplier effect and was an area where the IPU could make a significant contribution.

- 2.33 The leader of the delegation of Indonesia presented the IPU Report on the MDGs, tabled on the occasion of the 3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, and subsequently circulated as a parliamentary contribution to the preparatory process of the MDG Summit. It detailed the IPU's work over the past decade to help advance the MDGs, galvanise political support, make the case for more and better development financing, and generally encourage action on the ground.
- 2.34 The IPU comparative study on how parliaments worked in support of the MDGs was also presented to the Committee. The study, which reviewed parliamentary mechanisms for the MDGs in seven countries (India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa), was commented on by the delegation of Kenya and others that were exploring similar mechanisms. Several delegations recounted their experiences and the challenges they encountered. Parliamentarians from both developed and developing countries stated their commitment to continue to work towards achieving the MDGs by the target date of 2015.
- 2.35 The committee devoted its second session to the Brussels Programme of Action and preparations for the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC IV), scheduled for 2011. It heard presentations from the UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, the International Coordinator of LDC Watch and a member of parliament from the National Assembly of Malawi. The presentations addressed challenges and successes in LDCs, parliamentary involvement in LDC-related work and the priority areas to be included in the new programme of action for LDCs.
- 2.36 In the ensuing roundtable discussion, participants and presenters underscored the importance of parliamentary involvement in the design, implementation and review of the programme of action for LDCs. Participants referred to the importance of good governance, institutional strengthening and fighting corruption for achieving the MDGs. They requested more frequent reviews of programme implementation and suggested that future programmes include a reference to parliaments, thereby legitimising their role in the programme.
- 2.37 As it was the first time that parliaments were involved at such an early stage of establishing a programme for LDCs, the opportunity should not be missed. Parliaments were encouraged to take action well in advance of the Parliamentary Forum in May 2011 on the eve of LDC IV, identify and engage with authorities involved in the design of the new programme for the LDCs at the national level, and ensure parliamentary participation at regional and global preparatory meetings.

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- 2.38 During the course of the discussions Senator Crossin stated that 15 of the 49 LDCs are located in the Asia-Pacific region, and that Australia was working to provide 0.15 per cent of its GNP to aid the LDCs in line with international targets. Furthermore Senator Crossin stated that opening up world markets to LDCs would help alleviate poverty, and sought clarification of the measures to be included in the programme of action to help the LDCs promote trade, commerce and individual capacity-building.
- 2.39 In a separate session, the Committee reviewed cooperation between the IPU and the UN system over the past five years. It heard the 2010 report of the UN Secretary-General on Cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU, and welcomed the growing, more substantive partnership between the two organisations. It discussed the text of the forthcoming UN General Assembly resolution on the issue and underscored the importance of all Member Parliaments engaging actively with their foreign ministries, with a view to garnering robust support among UN Member States.
- 2.40 Several delegations took the floor to underscore the evolving role of parliaments in international relations, and the fact that UN-IPU relations at the global level could play an important role in helping to further clarify relations between the legislature and the executive at the national level. That held true particularly in countries where parliaments as institutions were still in the process of building their capacities and establishing themselves as strong and effective players on the national scene. The general feeling was that there was scope for the United Nations and the IPU to forge a strategic partnership, and from that perspective, the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly provided an important opportunity.
- 2.41 The Committee discussed political challenges facing the UN Climate Change Conference (COP16/CMP6), to be held in Cancun from 29 November to 10 December 2010. The IPU and the Mexican Congress would be organising a Parliamentary Meeting in the wings of the UN Conference with the support of the UNDP on 6 December, and legislators were encouraged to join their national delegations to the Climate Change Conference in December.
- 2.42 The Committee felt that, in view of the poor results of COP15, urgent progress was needed to restore faith in the ability of the Parties to take the process forward. It was vital to secure a tangible outcome in Cancun, and parliamentarians bore their share of responsibility for the success of the event. The Committee was briefed on the format of the Parliamentary Meeting in Cancun by the Chairperson of the External Relations Committee of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. The meeting was expected to adopt an outcome document, which would be presented to the UN Conference.

- 2.43 The Mexican Congress had prepared a preliminary draft, which the IPU had sent to all Member Parliaments for their comments. In its final form, the document should be a succinct but powerful political declaration for both governments and parliaments.
- 2.44 At its last sitting, the Committee was briefed on the results of the Beijing +15 review of gender equality. While some progress had been made, important challenges remained, which required the active participation of parliaments. Issues of particular relevance included the need to: improve enforcement of the existing legislative framework and oversight of gender policies; review and amend discriminatory legislation and practices; base policies on sex-disaggregated data and analysis; and mainstream gender into the work of parliaments. The Committee urged all Member Parliaments to discuss follow-up of the Beijing commitments and monitor progress.
- 2.45 The Committee heard a presentation on the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women. It welcomed the establishment of that body and called on parliaments to support it and follow its work. The Committee expressed the wish that a strong working relationship with the IPU be established, particularly in the areas of political empowerment of women, institutional gender mainstreaming, support to parliaments in promoting gender-sensitive legislation, combating violence against women, and implementation of relevant UN resolutions.
- 2.46 The Committee took note of the new composition of its Advisory Group. Recalling the work undertaken by the Group over the past few years, in particular the field missions to examine the implementation of the One UN projects in Tanzania and Viet Nam, the Group was encouraged to continue to explore modalities to best carry forward its mandate. That discussion would be continued during the next meeting of the Group, on 1 December at UN Headquarters in New York, immediately preceding the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations (2-3 December 2010).

Debate on the emergency item

Immediate action to support international relief efforts in response to natural disasters, in particular with regard to flood-stricken Pakistan. (Item 6)

- 2.47 The debate on the emergency item took place in the afternoon of Monday, 4 October. It was chaired by Mr A. Alonso Diaz-Caneja (Mexico), Vice-President of the Assembly. A total of 41 speakers from 38 parliamentary delegations and one observer took part.

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- 2.48 During the debate, speakers expressed their deep concern over the situation in flood-stricken Pakistan and other countries recently affected by natural disasters, and expressed their sympathy with the victims and their families. They urged all parliamentarians to seize that opportunity to promote international inter-parliamentary cooperation aimed at mitigating human suffering and accelerating rehabilitation and reconstruction by providing food, shelter and technical assistance to re-establish the agro industry, infrastructure and health and sanitation facilities. Several speakers also underscored the need to ensure that assistance reached the victims in Pakistan and to keep the world's attention focused on the post-flood situation until such time as the flood-affected areas were fully reconstructed, a prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- 2.49 Many speakers also underscored the need to immediately and effectively deal with the issue of climate change and improve parliamentary oversight of that issue with a view to mitigating the impact of future natural disasters. They urged all nations to comply with international commitments such as the Kyoto Protocol. They issued an urgent appeal to establish a global fund able to tackle unanticipated disasters and phenomena immediately, and urged the IPU to establish a committee to follow that important issue and promote and monitor the creation of such a fund.
- 2.50 During the debate Senator Forshaw expressed the delegation's deep sympathy with the people of Pakistan, who had suffered an almost unimaginable catastrophe. He expressed his deep concern for those who had been displaced from their homes, had their crops destroyed and lost their livelihoods. About 21 million people had been affected by the disaster, which was almost the equivalent of the entire population of Australia. Pakistan had been dealing with significant security, development and economic challenges for some time, which had all been compounded by the floods. He went on to state that the entire international community must do everything possible, as quickly as possible, to help the people of Pakistan. Although, the floodwaters were receding, the situation remained dire, with over 6 million people currently dependent on emergency food supplies and 10 million people in need of shelter. Senator Forshaw outlined that the World Food Programme had estimated that approximately 10 million people would require food relief until the end of January 2011. He stated that Australia was proud to have been one of the first countries to respond to the flood crisis, providing financial assistance amounting to US\$75 million, making it the fifth largest bilateral contributor to the crisis. Australia had provided relief supplies to United Nations partners and to the Government of Pakistan to assist with water, sanitation, shelter and health services. Senator Forshaw then outlined that an Australian joint

civilian and military field hospital had been established in central Punjab, which had been providing health care to the local population since the beginning of September 2010. The Australian Foreign Minister had visited Pakistan, that hospital and the resident team of health professionals, who thus far had treated more than 6,000 patients. Australia was ready to continue to provide financial, technical and practical support to the reconstruction process. In conclusion, Senator Forshaw stated that the immediate humanitarian crisis must be addressed, the infrastructure that had been destroyed must be reconstructed, and ways to mitigate flood damage must be considered, in order to avoid such human suffering in future.

- 2.51 The broad range of concerns expressed during the debates were reflected in the draft resolution, which was prepared by a drafting committee composed of representatives of: Bahrain, Benin, Cambodia, Canada, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mexico, Pakistan, Turkey and Uganda. It appointed Mr H. Khan (Pakistan) as its president and Mr B. Rae (Canada) as its rapporteur.
- 2.52 The draft resolution was unanimously adopted by the Assembly on Wednesday, 6 October. A copy of the resolution can be found in Appendix A.



3

187th Session of the Governing Council

Membership of the IPU

- 3.1 At its sitting on 4 October, the Governing Council took note that the Secretary General had been in contact over recent months with parliaments that were not members of the Organisation. He informed the Council that, at the initiative of the Parliaments of Australia and New Zealand, a meeting had taken place with the parliaments from the Pacific Islands, and it was hoped that a mechanism would be devised to allow them to become members in the near future.
- 3.2 At the 123rd Assembly, the Governing Council granted observer status to the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries (TURKPA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union of the Member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IPU-IGAD).
- 3.3 The IPU currently comprises 157 Member Parliaments.

Reports on activities of IPU Members

- 3.4 The Governing Council took note of the reports submitted by 58 IPU Members on how their parliaments had followed up and implemented recommendations contained in the three resolutions adopted by the 120th Assembly on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues, climate change and renewable energies, and freedom of expression and the right to information.
- 3.5 Council commended the parliaments concerned on their reports and the action they had taken and urged all Members to fulfil their obligations and to submit an annual report, as required by the Statutes.

- 3.6 The Council took note of the report on the many activities carried out by parliaments and the IPU to observe the International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2010. The IPU had proposed Political accountability: Strengthening links between parliaments and citizens as the theme for that year and had circulated posters, brochures and other promotional material to assist parliaments. Thirty-six parliaments informed the IPU of activities they had carried out.

Financial situation of the IPU

- 3.7 The Governing Council was presented with a comprehensive report on the financial situation of the IPU as at 30 June 2010, and an updated list of unpaid contributions as at 30 September 2010. On that date, two Members had significant arrears and were subject to sanctions. The Council further took note of the Secretary General's projected operating surplus of CHF 227,714 notwithstanding some new activities and higher than expected expenditure on others, due to lower than foreseen expenses for interpretation, translation/editing, publishing and institutional gifts for the 122nd Assembly, and other savings achieved under the External Relations and Programmes Divisions.
- 3.8 On the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Council agreed that the following activities be carried out within the approved budget ceiling for a total amount of CHF 573,000, which included reallocations already approved by the Council at the 122nd Assembly: CHF 50,000 for the Extraordinary Executive Committee, which took place in Namibia on 15 and 16 February 2010; higher than foreseen expenditure of CHF 103,000 for the 3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament; CHF 20,000 for co-sharing the cost of a meeting of Pacific Island parliaments (Auckland, 9-10 August); CHF 50,000 for modernizing the IPU website; CHF 40,000 to carry out an IT needs assessment; CHF 70,000 to organize a Climate Change Parliamentary Meeting in Mexico (December 2010); CHF 40,000 to prepare a report on the effectiveness of parliamentary mechanisms on the MDGs; and, lastly, CHF 140,000 to prepare a Global Parliamentary Report. The Members noted that not all of those items had been included in the projections prepared as at 30 June 2010 and hence, the projected surplus currently stood at CHF 87,000.

Programme and budget for 2011

- 3.9 The Council received the budget proposal for 2011 and a summary of planned activities and requirements for 2011-2013. Reporting for the Executive Committee, Mr. F.-X. de Donnea (Belgium) stated that the Committee had invited the Secretary General to revisit the 2011 budget and submit a revised version with no increase of the assessed contributions. He also highlighted the fact that several proposals by the Secretary General to enhance the functioning and management of the Secretariat, including changes to the Secretariat's organisation, could be implemented with immediate effect at no cost. It specifically encouraged the Secretary General to implement a new communications strategy within the confines of the IPU budget (ICTs).
- 3.10 During the debate, one Member proposed that the Secretariat continue its efforts to reduce costs, as some parliaments had not been able to send delegations to the Assembly due to financial constraints. He suggested that the IPU, taking into account the limited travel budgets of some parliaments, organize more meetings in close proximity to the less affluent Members. He also suggested that spending had to be closely monitored on staff costs and travel and that better use had to be made of tele- and video-conferencing. Another Member also underscored the need for the IPU to do more with less by optimizing new information and communication technologies.
- 3.11 The Secretary General, in response to those comments, confirmed the IPU's intention to start implementing some of those suggestions. He stated that a broad outline of the 2012 budget would be submitted to the members of the Executive Committee in February 2011 in order for discussions on the next budget to begin earlier than usual. In reference to a comment concerning the scale of contributions, the Secretary General confirmed that the scale would be reviewed at the 124th Assembly in Panama.
- 3.12 Following the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Governing Council approved the new scale of contributions and the revised 2011 budget. It approved gross operating expenses of CHF 18,086,540 and capital expenditures of CHF 125,000.

Cooperation with the United Nations system

- 3.13 The Governing Council took stock of recent developments in IPU-UN cooperation, and was informed of a variety of activities carried out in collaboration with or in support of the United Nations.
- 3.14 The Council noted in particular the many activities, including in-depth studies and reports, carried out by the IPU in support of parliamentary action to achieve the MDGs, as well as the input provided by the IPU to the 2010 high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the MDGs. The Council adopted a statement on the MDGs, in which the IPU pledged to continue to mobilize parliaments in their efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015.
- 3.15 The Governing Council welcomed the biennial Report of the UN Secretary-General on Cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU, and in particular its conclusions and recommendations for future action. The Council endorsed a draft resolution, which it recommended that States adopt at the UN General Assembly when debating the cooperation item on its agenda. All Member Parliaments were encouraged to work closely with their foreign ministries to garner strong support for that UN General Assembly resolution.

Consolidation of the reform of the IPU

- 3.16 The Governing Council received a first draft of a strategic plan for the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The document described the IPU today, how it was depicted in its Statutes and Rules and the internal and external environment in which it operated. It highlighted some of the challenges facing the organization, its strengths and comparative advantages.
- 3.17 The draft provided a basis for IPU Members to reflect on the organization, its mission and future direction. In order to assist Members in that exercise, it identified seven strategic objectives for the IPU, six covering the current areas of its activities and one concerning modernization of the Organization. The document listed 33 tasks/questions which it recommended be addressed by the membership as it set out to draft a strategy for the IPU for the coming years.
- 3.18 Several delegates expressed support for the exercise. They pleaded for sufficient time to carry out the process so that all Members could participate and commit themselves to the outcome. They underscored that the strategy would have to take account of the current financial difficulties facing parliaments in all parts of the world. Delegates suggested that certain IPU activities, for example those aimed at promoting democracy,

human rights and gender partnership, should be priority strategic objectives of the organization. It was also proposed that in current times of economic hardship, the IPU should give priority to assisting parliaments in promoting development and social justice.

- 3.19 Some delegates suggested that the proposal to base the IPU on an international convention would require further in-depth study and should be deferred to a later stage, as envisaged in the draft strategy.
- 3.20 The IPU President called on all Members to study the draft strategy and be fully involved in the exercise. He noted that one geopolitical group had already set up a working group to study the draft and he encouraged the other geopolitical groups to follow suit. He also called on the different committees within the IPU to study those aspects of the plan which were relevant to their area of work.
- 3.21 The President announced that the Executive Committee would hold a three-day extraordinary session in February 2011 to convert the draft strategy into a concise document expressing a clear vision for the IPU and its strategic development over the coming years. The document would be circulated to all Members in time for them to consider it at the 124th IPU Assembly.

Recent specialised conferences and meetings

- 3.22 The Governing Council received a full report on the 3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. The Conference was the biggest parliamentary summit ever organized, with Speakers and Deputy Speakers from 135 parliaments participating in the debates. The Conference adopted a declaration on *Securing global democratic accountability for the common good*. The Speakers' Conference had been preceded by the Sixth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament, which had adopted the *Bern initiative for global parliamentary action on maternal and child health*.
- 3.23 The Council took note of the results of a Regional Seminar for Latin American parliaments on violence against women, the Third Parliamentary Forum on Shaping the Information Society, a Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the UN Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, a Regional Conference "Towards enhanced parliamentary action to combat the trafficking of children for purposes of labour exploitation in West and Central Africa", a Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 2010 Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, a Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the XVIII International AIDS Conference, a Regional Workshop for Arab Parliaments on Implementing CEDAW and ending violence against women and a Regional seminar on parliamentary oversight in the area of security in West Africa.

Reports of plenary bodies and specialised committees

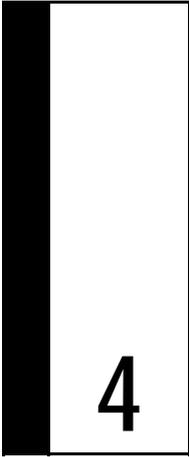
- 3.24 At its sitting on 6 October, the Governing Council heard the reports of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the Committee on Middle East Questions and the Gender Partnership Group.

Future inter-parliamentary meetings

- 3.25 The Governing Council took note of the dates for the next four Assemblies, which would be held in Panama, Bern, Kampala and Quebec City respectively. In addition to meetings already approved, the Governing Council approved the future meetings, for which approval had been pending.

Amendments to the Statutes and Rules

- 3.26 The Governing Council approved amendments to Rules 8 and 9 of the Rules of the Standing Committees and Rule 3 of the Rules of the Secretariat.



4

258th Session of the Executive Committee

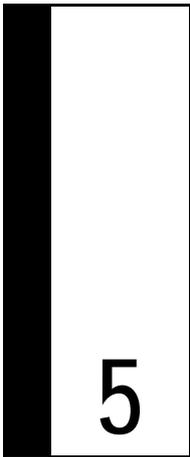
Work of the Executive

- 4.1 The Executive Committee held its 258th session in Geneva on 30 September and 1, 2 and 5 October 2010. The President chaired the meetings. The following titular and substitute members took part in the session: Mr. F.-X de Donnea (Belgium), Mrs Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria), Mr M. Nago (Benin), Mr N. Thavy (Cambodia), Ms J. Fotso (Cameroon), Ms M.A. Saa, substituting for Mr J.A. Coloma (Chile), Mr R. Del Picchia (France), Mrs S. Greiss (Egypt), Mr A. Alonso Diaz-Caneja (Mexico), Mr Young Chin (Republic of Korea), Mr K. Ornfjader (Sweden), Ms D. Stump (Switzerland), Mr R. Al-Shariqi (United Arab Emirates) and Mr Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam). Mr T. Toga (Ethiopia) and Mr M. Vardanyan (Armenia) were absent.
- 4.2 The Executive Committee elected by acclamation Ms Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria) as its Vice-President.
- 4.3 The Committee was informed of efforts to increase the membership of the IPU. A meeting held in Auckland with the leaders of Pacific parliaments had provided an opportunity to discuss steps that could be taken to facilitate their participation in the work of the IPU. The Committee noted the financial constraints of those parliaments and requested the Secretary General to make proposals to facilitate their effective participation in IPU meetings. It encouraged the Secretary General to undertake a similar effort in respect of the parliaments of small island developing States in the Caribbean.
- 4.4 The Committee concluded its four-yearly review of the participation of observers in IPU meetings. Since the majority of observer organisations had declared their interest in continuing to participate in IPU events, the Committee recommended that the status of all current permanent observers be maintained. At the same time, it noted a worrying increase in

the size of observer delegations to IPU Assemblies and requested the Secretary General to take steps to ensure that the rules on the participation of observer organisations be respected at all times.

- 4.5 The Committee had a preliminary exchange of views on a first draft strategy for the IPU's future development. It decided to take a step-by-step approach. In the first instance, the Members and geopolitical groups would be invited to provide comments on the draft strategy and encouraged to respond to the 33 questions it contained. In parallel, it would encourage all IPU committees, in particular the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, to make proposals on those aspects of the plan that fell within their respective areas of competence. The Committee decided to meet in February to draft a concise strategic plan based on the input received. The plan would be circulated to all IPU Members in time for it to be considered at the 124th Assembly.
- 4.6 The Committee also discussed the functioning of Standing Committees and decided to revert to the issue in the context of its future consideration of the strategy for the IPU's development. It decided that the issue of a possible convention for the IPU and a new agreement on cooperation with the United Nations would be considered at a later stage in the light of the outcome of that initial exercise.
- 4.7 The Committee debated extensively the financial situation of the IPU and the programme and budget for 2011 and beyond. It decided to take advantage of its February meeting to hold an initial exchange of views on the direction and principal elements of the 2012 budget. The Committee members requested the Secretary General to submit preliminary budget estimates sufficiently in advance so that they could examine them prior to the meeting.
- 4.8 The Committee exchanged views on an action plan to strengthen the management, structure, functions and work processes of the IPU Secretariat. It took note of the resulting reorganisation of the Secretariat's management structure. It endorsed the proposals contained in the action plan but noted that some of them would have to be deferred until such time as the requisite financial resources could be identified.
- 4.9 The Committee endorsed proposals for a new communications policy for the IPU, which would include a shift in focus towards parliaments and how the IPU could be more relevant to their needs. The policy involved investing more resources in modern ICTs, dedicated resources for the IPU website and the streamlining of IPU publications. The Committee was informed that the new communications policy would require a team

consisting of a communications director, a webmaster and an administrative assistant. The team would be established by temporarily transferring a post from the Executive Office to the new Communications Division and reviewing and, as required, discontinuing existing communications functions. The Committee noted that the process to put in place the new communication policy would be completed by mid-2011.



5

Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians

Work of the Committee

- 5.1 The Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians met on 3 October 2010. The session was chaired by Mrs S. Greiss (Egypt), President of the Committee, followed up on the previous Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and laid the groundwork for its next session. In addition, the Coordinating Committee discussed the contribution of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians to the 123rd IPU Assembly.
- 5.2 The Committee was briefed on the work and recommendations of the Gender Partnership Group by one of its members, Mrs Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria).
- 5.3 It heard a report follow-up by the members of the Coordinating Committee of the Fifteenth Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, held in Bangkok, which had been dedicated to human trafficking and violence against women in places of detention and prisons, and discussed its contribution to the 123rd Assembly. To that end, it examined the draft reports to be discussed at the panel discussion of each of the three Standing Committees with a focus on gender issues, which the Rapporteurs would be encouraged to take into account.
- 5.4 The Committee took stock of the preparations under way for the Sixteenth Meeting of Women Parliamentarians. It decided after a vote, to examine the items on the agenda of the 124th Assembly attributed to the First and Third Standing Committees respectively, namely: *Providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power and Transparency and accountability in the funding of political parties and election campaigns.*

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- 5.5 It also decided to hold a discussion on the conclusions of the study on gender-sensitive parliaments.
- 5.6 Following a presentation made by a UNICEF Representative, the Committee decided to organise a panel discussion, *Narrowing the gaps: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals with equity for children*, at the 124th Assembly.
- 5.7 The Committee exchanged views on how to enhance the work of the Meeting and Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians and ensure the full participation of women MPs at IPU Assemblies. It reflected on ways to mainstream gender at all levels of the Organisation.
- 5.8 It stressed the importance of giving greater visibility to the work of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and its Coordinating Committee, both within and outside the IPU. It recommended reporting on the work of the Coordinating Committee at the meetings of the various geopolitical groups. To attract the media and the wider public, it suggested establishing an international award to popularise the work of parliamentarians and/or institutions that made a significant contribution to gender equality.
- 5.9 Regarding the participation of women MPs at IPU meetings, the Committee suggested examining new measures to enhance women's participation in delegations to IPU Assemblies or other meetings.
- 5.10 Concerning gender mainstreaming at all levels of the IPU, the Committee discussed ways of ensuring that the Rapporteurs of the three standing Committees took into account the gender perspective from the moment they started preparing the draft report, such as by providing them with guidelines and orienting Committee Secretaries to take the gender dimension into consideration. It also discussed strategies for guaranteeing that more women held elective offices at the IPU, in particular posts on the Executive Committee. Lastly, following an address by the Secretary General, the Committee decided to participate in the preparation of the organisation's Strategic Plan, currently under way.

6

Subsidiary committees and other activities

Introduction

- 6.1 During the 123rd IPU Assembly, a number of subsidiary committees met and a range of other meetings and events were held. This chapter outlines the matters considered during those meetings and activities.

Meetings of geopolitical groups

- 6.2 The IPU has six geopolitical groups that meet during the assemblies to discuss the operation and activities of the IPU. Australia is a member of two geopolitical groups: the Asia-Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group. The Australian delegation participated in meetings of both those groups at the 123rd IPU Assembly.
- 6.3 The Twelve Plus Group met on 3 and 6 October 2010. The two major issues discussed at the meetings related to the budget and financial situation of the IPU, and the proposal for the IPU to move towards being a treaty based organisation.
- 6.4 The Twelve Plus Group discussed their concerns regarding the budgetary processes of the IPU, particularly in relation to financial contributions by member parliaments. During a time when many parliaments were experiencing severe budget cuts many delegations expressed concern that the IPU was continuing to increase annual subscriptions. The feeling within the Group was that the IPU should be looking at ways to reduce expenditure rather than just increasing subscriptions.

- 6.5 The Twelve Plus Group also discussed the proposal for the IPU to become a treaty based organisation. Many delegations outlined their concerns that their parliament would not be in a position to enter into a treaty as it was outside of their nation's constitution to do so. On behalf of the Australian delegation Mr Secker explained that the treaty project would meet a constitutional obstacle in Australia, since the Australian Speaker, let alone parliamentarians, whether from the party in power or from the opposition parties, could not bind the Government. Furthermore, Mr Secker expressed the concern that adopting a treaty would greatly harm the IPU's goal of reinstating the United States, and that there were many other alternatives for improving parliamentary democracy.
- 6.6 The Asia-Pacific Group met on 3 October 2010. At the meeting the Australian delegation expressed their desire to represent the group on the drafting committee for the resolution on the emergency item regarding the recent Pakistan floods. Unfortunately due to limited places on the drafting committee the delegation was ultimately unsuccessful in obtaining a place on the drafting committee.

Bilateral meetings

- 6.7 During the course of the 123rd Assembly, the Australian delegation held bilateral meetings with the delegations from Japan and Pakistan. Discussions at those meetings focused on Australia's bilateral relationships with both countries. During the meeting with the meeting with the Japanese delegation, Senator Forshaw expressed his hope that a parliamentary from Japan would visit Australia in the near future, as it has over ten years since the last delegation visited. The delegation from Pakistan expressed their thanks for the practical and financial support received from Australia during their recent floods. The delegation went on to ask for continued support from Australia as efforts entered the reconstruction phase of the disaster, especially in the area of agriculture.

Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

- 6.8 The Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs is tasked with managing the operations of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs. Australia had been invited by the President of the IPU to nominate a delegate to represent the Asia-Pacific Group on the Advisory Group for an initial term of two years. Whilst consideration was being

given to nominating a permanent delegate to the Advisory Group, Senator Crossin represented Australia at the meeting held on 5 October 2010. The Hon Anthony Byrne MP has subsequently been nominated as the permanent representative of the Australian Parliament.

Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

- 6.9 Ms Z. Benarous (Algeria), Ms S. Carstairs (Canada), Ms R. Green (Mexico), Mr K. Jalali (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Mr P. Mahoux (Belgium) participated in the Committee's 131st session, which took place from 2 to 5 October. The session was also attended by substitute members Mr B. Barovic (Slovenia), Ms A. Boumediene-Thiery (France) and Mr K.N. Pangilinan (Philippines).
- 6.10 The Committee examined the individual situation of 306 sitting or former parliamentarians from 35 countries. It held seven meetings with official delegations and also met with the parliamentarians concerned or their representatives in four of the cases. The Committee conducted 13 hearings in relation to cases it was studying. The resolutions submitted for approval to the Governing Council concerned cases in 21 countries. One case was presented for the first time.

Committee on Middle East Questions

- 6.11 The Committee on Middle East Questions met on 3 October 2010 under the chairmanship of its President, Ms A. Clwyd (United Kingdom). Two titular members, Mr F.-X de Donnea (Belgium) and Mr S. Janquin (France), and one substitute member, Mr H. Alir (Turkey), were present. The meeting was also attended by Ms N. Ali Assegaf (Indonesia), who replaced Mr L.H. Ishaq, a titular member, and by Mr N. Movassat (Germany), who replaced Mr J. Winkler, a substitute member.
- 6.12 The Committee invited Ms E. Mancusi, from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), to brief it about the Agency's work to provide relief to Palestinian refugees, in particular women. She highlighted how the current situation affected Palestinian women and how, for example, the incidence of domestic violence against women had escalated in recent years.

- 6.13 The members of the Committee expressed support for the work of UNRWA and urged all countries to provide financial support to the Agency so that it could carry out its mandate and, in particular, extend assistance and support to women and children.
- 6.14 The Committee also discussed its mandate, composition and programme of work and submitted a set of recommendations for the Governing Council's consideration.

Gender Partnership Group

- 6.15 The Gender Partnership Group held its 26th session on 2 and 5 October 2010. In attendance were Mr R. Del Picchia (France), Mrs Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria), Mrs S. Greiss (Egypt) and Mr Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam).
- 6.16 As was customary, the Group compared the composition of the delegations attending the 123rd IPU Assembly to that of previous statutory meetings.
- 6.17 It took note that of the total number of delegates present at the 123rd Assembly, 149 (roughly 32%) were women, which it considered a fair percentage. The Group noted, however, that percentage had been reached not because delegations had included more women but because general attendance had been lower. The Group expressed concern over the growing tendency to include a single woman in delegations. It recalled that the Statutes called for parity in the composition of delegations, an objective that was far from being achieved.
- 6.18 The Group noted in particular that of the delegations present at the 123rd Assembly that were composed of more than two members, 17 had no women. It considered the situation worrying since that figure had been on the rise for the past four years.
- 6.19 At the 123rd Assembly, the delegations of Malta, Qatar and Saudi Arabia had been sanctioned for having no women in their delegations for three consecutive years.
- 6.20 Based on the foregoing, the Gender Partnership Group decided to reopen the debate on the composition of delegations and on how to ensure a more equal participation of men and women at Assemblies. It intended to conduct a comparative study on the participation of women in Assemblies and identify concrete measures to redress the current situation. It also intended to broaden its scope by examining women's representation in all IPU bodies, in particular the Standing Committees, and setting objectives to enhance their participation. The Group decided to work on devising mechanisms to mainstream gender into all of the IPU's work, and

suggested the following measures: further sensitising the geopolitical groups, ensuring that women were better represented in the bureaux of the Standing Committees, applying the principle of parity in the selection of rapporteurs of the Standing Committees and sensitising the rapporteurs to the gender issue inter alia by preparing a relevant handbook.

- 6.21 The Group stated that those issues should be taken into account during the discussions on the IPU's Strategic Plan.
- 6.22 It examined the IPU's budget from a gender perspective and noted with satisfaction that the 2011 budget afforded greater visibility to gender equality questions. The Group was pleased to note that the zero growth foreseen for the 2011 budget had not affected the budget of the Gender Partnership Programme. Indeed, it was crucial for that Programme to continue receiving a high level of funding both from the ordinary budget and from voluntary contributions.
- 6.23 As it did on a regular basis, the Group examined the situation of the parliaments with no women members: six unicameral parliaments and the lower houses of bicameral parliaments. Most of the parliaments concerned were in the Pacific Islands or the Gulf Cooperation Council States.
- 6.24 The Group took stock of certain activities conducted under the Gender Partnership Programme. It invited all parliaments to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November. It noted that in 2009, about 30 parliaments had organised activities to mark that Day. In 2010, the Group had requested the IPU President and the President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians to write to all parliaments to remind them to commemorate the occasion.
- 6.25 The Group examined the status of a study – the first of its kind – that was currently under way on gender-sensitive parliaments. Given its importance, the Group requested that the results of that study, which should be concluded in March 2011, be presented in plenary to the 124th Assembly in Panama.

Review and follow-up session *Scaling up parliamentary action on migration and development*

- 6.26 The session, the second of its kind since 2009, was designed to review follow-up action taken by Member Parliaments to give effect to past IPU resolutions. It focused on the resolutions *Migration and development*, adopted by 113th Assembly (Geneva, October 2005), and *Migrant workers, people trafficking, xenophobia and human rights*, adopted by the 118th Assembly (Cape Town, April 2008).
- 6.27 The session took the form of a panel discussion, chaired by the IPU President, Dr T. – B. Gurirab. The panellists were Mr P. Munoz Ledo, Chairperson of the External Relations Committee of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, Mr. S. Marchi, former Canadian MP and Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, currently Commissioner on the United Nations Global Commission on International Migration, Mr A. Hernandez Basave, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations Office at Geneva, and French Senator, Mr R. Del Picchia, a member of the IPU Executive Committee.
- 6.28 Introductory presentations by the panellists sparked numerous comments and questions from the audience. The general feeling was that, despite migration's global dimension, the response by governments had been largely national in scope. The IPU, therefore, should not only keep international migration, including its human rights aspects, permanently on its radar screens, but should also scale up inter-parliamentary cooperation in that field. It was suggested, for example, that the IPU establish an ad hoc body to promote gender involvement of parliaments in the *Global Forum on Migration and Development*, the next session of which would take place in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in November 2010.
- 6.29 Echoing the views of Mr del Picchia, who referred in his presentation to the Regional Conference on Migration and Violence against Women in Europe, hosted by the French IPU Group in December 2009, the participants underscored the importance of paying constant parliamentary attention to the vulnerability of migrant women to gender-based violence, a particularly disturbing aspect of the migration phenomenon.

Launch of an advocacy kit for parliamentarians on Disaster Risk Reduction

- 6.30 During the Council session on 6 October, the IPU and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) jointly launched an advocacy kit for parliamentarians, *Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. It was presented to the Council members by Mr S. Bricenco, Director of the UNISDR Secretariat in Geneva.
- 6.31 The new tool is intended to assist members of parliament in their oversight of national progress and investments made towards achieving the MDGs from the perspective of disaster risk reduction, a crucial component of development policies, steps and interventions required to reduce or eliminate disaster risks. The kit provides examples of good parliamentary practice in many countries and shows why disaster risk reduction is indispensable for ensuring steady progress towards the achievement of the MDGs. The publication is available in English, French and Spanish and can be downloaded from the IPU website (<http://www.ipu.org/english/pblctns.htm>).

Meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament

- 6.32 In conjunction with the 123rd Assembly, meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP) were held from 4 to 7 October 2010. The ASGP is constituted as a consultative body of the IPU and seeks to facilitate personal contacts between holders of the office of Secretary General in any parliamentary assembly, whether such assembly is a member of the IPU or not. The ASGP studies the law, procedure, practice and working methods of different parliaments and proposes measures for improving those methods and for securing cooperation between the services of different parliaments. The ASGP also assists the IPU when asked to do so, on subjects within the scope of the ASGP. The Australian Parliament was not represented at the meetings.

7

Meetings with International Organisations

Introduction

- 7.1 The Australian parliamentary delegation that attended the 123rd IPU Assembly undertook a short official visit to France to meet with some of the international organisations based in Paris. The visit took place between 6 and 9 October 2010. The program for the visit is outlined at Appendix B of this report.
- 7.2 The visit followed on from similar programs for delegations attending IPU Assemblies. The purpose of meetings with the international organisations was to gain an insight to global issues that affect Australia, and how the global community is addressing these issues.

International Energy Agency

- 7.3 The delegation visited the International Energy Agency (IEA) for a briefing on the operations of the organisation and the major issues which it is confronting. The IEA was established in 1974 following the oil crisis of that year. The key mission of the IEA is to ensure the energy security of its 28 members. Australia has been a member since 1979.
- 7.4 The four prime objectives of the IEA are:
- Energy Security
 - Environmental Protection
 - Economic Growth
 - Engagement Worldwide

- 7.5 During the presentation the IEA outlined the key work they are undertaking in the area of sustainable energy, including ways to increase the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.
- 7.6 They also outlined work in relation to global carbon capture and storage (CCS). Australia has provided support to this study, including support to enhance existing IEA CCS activity including technical and legal and regulatory analysis, capacity building and outreach activities as well as working with the Global Carbon capture and Storage Institute to facilitate a harmonised effort on international coordination of CCS activity.
- 7.7 As part of its work the IEA is to carry out In-Depth Reviews of energy policies of member countries. Six member countries have one of these reviews each year. The review covers the energy policy spectrum under the following headings: General Energy Policy, Climate Change, Energy Efficiency, Oil, Gas, Coal, Electricity, Renewable Energy, Nuclear Energy and Energy R&D. Australia's review will be taking place during 2011.

French Senate

- 7.8 The delegation visited the French Senate to meet with members of the France-Australia Parliamentary Group. At the time of the visit the French Senate was in the middle of a robust debate regarding pension reform and the lifting of the retirement age. The debate had been taking place over many days with the Senate expected to sit continuously for many days until a vote was taken. The issue had much public attention with large demonstrations against the reforms taking place in Paris during the time of the debate. The debate was briefly adjourned as the Senate officially welcomed the delegation to the chamber.
- 7.9 During the visit the delegation also met with Senator Robert del Picchia, the Chairman of the IPU Twelve Plus Group. The delegation also undertook a tour of the Senate's greenhouse facilities where fresh flowers are grown for use within the Senate building.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

- 7.10 The delegation visited the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for briefings on both the structure of the organisation and also the financial outlook following the Global Economic Crisis.
- 7.11 The OECD was established in 1961 with its headquarters in Paris. The OECD has 34 member nations, including Australia. There are currently four countries seeking membership of the OECD, these countries being Chile, Estonia, Israel and Slovenia. The OECD employs over 2,500 full-time staff, including around 90 Australians.
- 7.12 The OECD looks into all aspects of modern economies with the exception of Culture and Defence. The OECD regularly examines policies of member countries and these reports are often used by Governments to benchmark their policy outcomes against other member countries. The OECD is also increasing its co-operation with non-members who have large modern economies, such as China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and South Africa.
- 7.13 Though the OECD has traditionally worked mainly at the executive government level, the organisation is increasingly recognising the important role that parliaments play in determining policies that affect economic growth. The OECD is now running a program of seminars and meetings for parliamentarians.
- 7.14 The OECD provided the delegation with an overview of its work following the Global Economic Crisis, including the recent meeting of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting. The theme of the meeting was "*From Policy Driven Recovery to Sustained Growth*". The meeting had been attended by the then Minister for Trade, the Hon Simon Crean. The OECD was of the opinion that the world economic recovery may be slowing faster than previously anticipated. Though the recovery was slowing the OECD was of the belief that it was unlikely that the world economy was heading for another downturn.
- 7.15 The OECD was of the strong opinion that the Global Economic Crisis had provided the opportunity for member countries to strengthen, whilst at the same time streamlining, many of their regulatory processes. This would assist in both averting future economic crises, but also assist in sustained periods of growth.
- 7.16 The OECD also outlined their work in relation to Green Growth strategies. The OECD is placing increased focus in this area as was in the process of undertaking a major review titled "*Report of the Green Growth Strategy*" which was due for release in May 2011. The OECD outlined to the

delegation the main points of the strategy as they are important for both developed and emerging economies. These included that the report will provide a broad framework for understanding green growth, outlining the key parameters and policy approaches needed to move towards more sustainable economies.

- 7.17 The OECD also briefed the delegation on its work regarding its Regional Development Review. The review is investigating the impact and importance of regional areas in overall economic growth within modern economies, and how regional areas compare to metropolitan areas in terms of growth. The review is also looking into current policies regarding regional development, and looking to provide member countries with recommendations to assist them in this area. As part of its review Melbourne and Victoria were being included, at the request of the then Victorian Government.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

- 7.18 The delegation visited the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for a briefing on the structure and role of the organisation and as well as to be briefed on some of its programs that are of relevance to Australia.
- 7.19 The delegation received a briefing on the World Heritage program, including the process by which sites seek inclusion on the list. Currently there are 936 sites worldwide, with on average new nine sites being added each year. For a site to be listed it must go before a 21 member committee. World Heritage listed sites do not receive any funding support from UNESCO, but are normally funded by partnerships between government, business and philanthropic foundations.
- 7.20 One of the major programs that UNESCO manages is the establishment of biosphere reserves in different parts of the world. Biosphere reserves are sites established by countries and recognised under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme to promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. Biosphere reserves remain under national control, however they share their experience and research within the World Network of Biosphere reserves. There are currently 15 Biosphere reserves in Australia.

- 7.21 While at UNESCO the delegation also had discussions regarding programs to maintain Indigenous languages and culture. This is of strong interest to Australia, particularly in Northern Australia where a number of Indigenous languages and cultural traditions are being lost over time. UNESCO are working on programs not just to maintain the existing languages and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples, but are also looking at ways to re-establish those that have already been lost.
- 7.22 The delegation also attended the UNESCO Commonwealth Week Reception.

Senator Michael Forshaw
Senator for New South Wales

APPENDIX A

IMMEDIATE ACTION TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL RELIEF EFFORTS IN RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS, IN PARTICULAR WITH REGARD TO FLOOD-STRICKEN PAKISTAN

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 123rd IPU Assembly
(Geneva, 6 October 2010)*

The 123rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Recalling the resolution on the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile adopted by the 122nd IPU Assembly (Bangkok, 2010), which acknowledges that the growing frequency, intensity and impact of disasters pose a significant threat to people's lives and livelihoods, and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals,

Also recalling the resolution on natural disasters adopted by the 112th IPU Assembly (Manila, 2005), which proposes that nations further strengthen their cooperation on disaster-prevention efforts,

Further recalling previous United Nations General Assembly resolutions on enhancing humanitarian aid in natural disasters, in particular resolution 64/294 of 24 August 2010, which urges the international community, in particular donor countries, international financial institutions and relevant international organizations, as well as the private sector and civil society, to extend full support and assistance to the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of the floods and to meet the medium- and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction needs,

Noting the international framework for action provided by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which were the main outcomes of the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction,

Also noting the decisions of the Forty-sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly regarding the establishment of the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (UNCERF) as a mechanism for ensuring that funds go where they are most needed and that there is a rapid and coordinated response by the international community to natural disasters,

Underscoring the importance of international inter-parliamentary cooperation in natural disaster mitigation, given the growing role played by international and regional inter-parliamentary organizations in related social and humanitarian areas,

Deeply concerned about the suffering endured by the victims of natural disasters - loss of life, refugee flows, collective displacement of populations, and physical and financial destruction - and *considering* that this should serve to promote international inter-parliamentary cooperation aimed at mitigating human suffering and accelerating rehabilitation and reconstruction,

Considering that over 2,000 lives were lost in the floods in Pakistan, 2 million people were displaced and the physical damage and resulting economic losses were huge; *also considering* that, according to Pakistani Government figures, more than 20 million people have been left homeless, over 1.8 million houses damaged, 3,000 people injured, 40 bridges damaged, 2 million hectares of cultivated land fouled, 1.3 million hectares of standing crops destroyed, 1.2 million heads of livestock drowned, 3.5 million jobs lost, and 1,300 schools and 5,000 health facilities damaged,

Noting that the massive scale of destruction and loss of life caused by the unprecedented flooding, which was itself triggered by torrential rainfall in an otherwise arid region, reflects the adverse impact of climate change and the growing vulnerability of countries to such change,

Also noting the growing number and complexity of human catastrophes and natural disasters, the impact of which exceeds the disaster-response capacity of many affected countries, in particular their ability to provide food, medicine, shelter and health care to disaster victims,

Expressing its sincere sympathy and solidarity with the people and communities affected by disasters, particularly those in flood-stricken Pakistan, in the wake of the extensive damage and loss of life and property and the collective suffering that they have endured,

Praising the efforts made by the Government of Pakistan to reverse the negative impact of the recent disaster on people's daily lives,

1. *Urges* the international community, particularly donor countries, international financial institutions and relevant international organizations, the private sector and civil society to extend their full support and assistance to the Government of Pakistan and to mitigate the adverse impact of the floods by taking swift measures such as writing off and/or rescheduling Pakistan's debt, providing market access to revive Pakistan's economy and investing in medium- and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction projects;
2. *Appeals* to international and regional parliamentary organizations, UN agencies and relevant regional and international organizations to redouble their efforts and develop programmes to heighten awareness of the damages caused by and potential risks of the flood in Pakistan and of the need for Pakistan to overcome this disaster;
3. *Underscores* the importance of a rapid response by the international community, in particular the United Nations, to meet the needs of people affected by natural hazards that may become disasters, especially the people of Pakistan, who have sustained heavy losses as a result of the recent devastating floods, and *urges* all potential stakeholders to extend humanitarian aid to all those affected by such a disaster;
4. *Requests* the relevant UN bodies to take into account the needs identified by the authorities of Pakistan and *calls upon* international financial institutions, in particular the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and governments to further contribute to the efforts aimed at meeting the needs of the people in the flood-stricken areas of Pakistan, and *encourages* the Government of Pakistan to continue its own efforts to introduce the financial and economic reform required for successful reconstruction;
5. *Appeals* to that the international community to respond rapidly and appropriately by contributing to the Pakistan Emergency Fund established by the United Nations and increasing the budget allocated to UN CERF, and *calls upon* donor countries to secure reliable and diverse donations for this Fund;
6. *Calls upon* parliaments to urge their governments to prioritize compliance with international commitments such as the Kyoto Protocol and other agreements dealing with climate change;
7. *Also calls upon* governments to provide adequate and accessible resources to UN agencies involved in funding and providing disaster assistance, and *appeals* to the IPU to support UN efforts in this area by developing a parliamentary programme on disaster-risk reduction that encompasses mitigation, prevention and preparedness;
8. *Encourages* all governments to further coordinate their international relief, reconstruction and recovery activities, among themselves and with humanitarian agencies, and to take concrete action to enhance people's understanding of the need for disaster-risk reduction through public awareness, education and training;
9. *Calls upon* parliaments to urge their governments - through their legislative and oversight roles - the United Nations and its specialized agencies and all relevant regional and international organizations to develop disaster-risk-reduction strategies, facilitate the exchange of relevant technology, establish early warning systems, and develop rapid response mechanisms, in particular under the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) launched by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP and UNISDR;
10. *Appeals* to the United Nations to hold an international conference on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the flood-affected areas in Pakistan, on the understanding that one day of the proceedings will be devoted to an IPU-sponsored parliamentary meeting, and *calls upon* the UN Secretary-General to take the necessary action to that end;
11. *Issues* an urgent call for all nations, acting within the framework of a strategy to manage unforeseen events, and in view of the need to ensure global security, to establish a global

fund able to tackle unanticipated disasters and phenomena immediately, and *urges* the IPU⁴⁷ to establish a committee to follow this important issue and to promote and monitor the creation of such a fund;

12. *Requests* the IPU Secretary General to report on implementation of this resolution at the 124th IPU Assembly.

APPENDIX B

Program of meetings with International Organisations

Thursday 7 October

Meetings at the International Energy Agency (IEA)

11:30 Welcome brief and overview of IEA activities by
Mr Bo Diczfalusy
Director of Sustainable Energy Policy and Technology

11:55 Presentation on renewable by
Ms Samantha Olz
Analyst, Directorate for Sustainable Energy Policy and Technology

12:20 Presentation on Carbon Capture and Storage by
Mr Brendan Beck
Analyst, Directorate for Sustainable Energy Policy and Technology

Visit to the Australian Embassy and Permanent Delegation to UNESCO Paris

12:45 Informal lunch and briefing hosted by
Mr David Ritchie
Ambassador

Visit to the French Senate

14:30 Welcome to the French Senate by
Senator Daniel Raoul
Vice President of the France-Australia Senate Friendship Group

15:00 Visit to the Senate's Orchid Exhibition

16:00 Presentation on the role of the Senate followed by a visit to the Senate's public session

Friday 8 October**Meetings at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**

- 10:00 Meeting with Ms Willemien Bax
Head of the Public Affairs Division in the Public Affairs and Communications Directorate
- 10:45 Meeting with Mr Sebastian Barnes
Senior Economic (European Union, Euro Area, Luxembourg), Economics Department
- 11:45 Meeting with Mr William Tompson
Head of the regional and Rural Development Unit, Governance Directorate

Meetings at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

- 15:15 Meeting with Mr Hans D'Orville
Assistant Director for Strategic Planning
- 16:00 Joint meeting with Dr Natarajan Ishwaran
Director of the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences;
Dr Douglas Nakashima
Chief of Sustainable Development of Coastal Regions and Small Island Developing States Section; and
Dr Thomas Schaaf
Senior Programme Specialist on Ecological Sciences and Biodiversity