



PARLIAMENT  
OF AUSTRALIA

# Australian Parliamentary Delegation

Manama, Bahrain  
11-15 March 2023

146<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the  
Inter-Parliamentary Union

REPORT | MAY 2023



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# Members of the Delegation

## Leader of the Delegation

- The Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Federal Member for Oxley, Queensland  
Australian Labor Party

## Delegates

- Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC  
Senator for Western Australia  
Liberal Party of Australia
- The Hon Warren Entsch MP  
Federal Member for Leichhardt, Queensland  
Liberal National Party of Queensland
- Senator Fatima Payman  
Senator for Western Australia  
Australian Labor Party
- Dr Gordon Reid MP  
Federal Member for Robertson, New South Wales  
Australian Labor Party

## Officials

- Dr Jane Thomson, Delegation Secretary
- Ms Elise Williamson, Senior Research Officer

## 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly – Manama, Bahrain

The 146<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly took place in Manama, Bahrain from 11 to 15 March 2023.

The overall theme of the Assembly was: *Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance.*

The Assembly was attended by 661 members of parliament, representing 136 member parliaments. Of the 661 parliamentarians, 228 or 34 per cent were women and 148 or approximately 22 per cent were young MPs (under 45 years of age). There were 58 presiding officers who attended the Assembly, 7 associate members and 23 observers.

The Australian delegation was led by the Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives and included Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, the Hon Warren Entsch MP, Senator Fatima Payman and Dr Gordon Reid MP.



*Australian delegation to the IPU 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Manama, Bahrain.*

### Background

The IPU is the international organisation of parliaments of sovereign states. The IPU works with parliaments to promote democratic governance, institutions and values and aims to improve lives building strong national parliaments that can deliver better outcomes for citizens. It does this by:

- equipping members of parliament and parliamentarians to make changes through their own work;
- building on the expertise of its members;
- encouraging dialogue and bringing together members of parliament from across the world; and
- considering questions of international interest and concern.

Founded in 1889, there are currently 178 parliaments that are members of the IPU and 14 associate members (mostly parliaments drawn from groups of nations, or similar bodies). Most IPU members are affiliated with one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.

The IPU Strategy for 2022-2026 lists five strategic objectives:

- building effective and empowered parliaments
- promoting inclusive and representative parliaments
- supporting resilient and innovative parliaments
- catalysing collective parliamentary action
- strengthening the IPU's accountability.

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body of the IPU and brings together parliamentarians to consider international issues and make recommendations for action.

While the IPU is constantly active in promoting democracy, the major focus for the Australian delegation is participation in the twice-yearly assemblies.

## Assembly

The 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly was formally opened on 11 March. The Assembly's agenda included the following items:

- General debate on the theme: *Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance.*
- Consideration of a draft resolution on *Cyberattacks and cybercrime: The new risks to global security* (Standing Committee on Peace and International Security).
- Consideration of a draft resolution on *Parliamentary efforts in achieving negative carbon balances of forests* (Standing Committee on Sustainable Development).

- Reports of the Standing Committees.

In his opening address to the Assembly, the IPU President, Mr Duarte Pacheco noted that peaceful coexistence and inclusion are declining across the world while intolerance and discrimination are on the rise. In a context in which trust in government and the media is eroding, Mr Pacheco highlighted the important role that parliamentarians can play in building peaceful and inclusive societies. He indicated that such work must begin within parliamentary communities themselves.

Mr Pacheco also drew attention to the substantial caseload of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians which seeks to protect and defend MPs who are facing abuse, mistreatment or even death. Noting the growing number of MPs facing serious violations of their rights and safety, Mr Pacheco stated that:

It is time for the global parliamentary community to step up its solidarity, for all MPs around the world. More broadly, governments around the world must match their pledges to create tolerant and inclusive societies with concrete action to guarantee human rights for all. In this context, I wish to recall the extremely difficult situation women are facing in many countries around the world, in particular in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Pacheco also raised concerns about the war in Ukraine, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and terrorism affecting many regions including countries of the Sahel region where more people died in 2022 than in all other countries of the world. He also brought attention to the impact of natural disasters including floods, hurricanes and severe drought as well as sea level rise in the Pacific.

Highlighting the seriousness of these events on lives and livelihoods, Mr Pacheco called for action, noting that the IPU was launching a *Parliaments for the Planet* campaign, with the aim of mobilising all parliaments, parliamentarians, and staff to undertake concrete action to reduce their carbon footprint. He noted that the campaign provided 10 actions that every individual can take.<sup>2</sup>

As part of the campaign, the Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives was interviewed about environmentally sustainable initiatives undertaken by the Australian Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Duarte Pacheco, President of the IPU, Inaugural ceremony speech, 11 March 2023, <https://www.ipu.org/download/16441> (accessed 29 March 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Mr Duarte Pacheco, President of the IPU, Inaugural ceremony speech, 11 March 2023, <https://www.ipu.org/download/16441> (accessed 29 March 2023).

<sup>3</sup> The Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Interview for the *My Parliament, my planet* campaign, [Parliaments for the Planet \(ipu.org\)](https://www.ipu.org)

## Debates at the Assembly and other activities

The two major debates in the Plenary - the general debate and the debate on the emergency item - are a key focus of Assembly business.

Two members of the Australian delegation contributed to the general debate. On 13 March, the Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives contributed to the genal debate on behalf of the Australian delegation.

In his contribution, Mr Speaker drew attention to the high level of support for ethnic diversity and multiculturalism in Australia which gives our society a significant advantage in responding to the pressures placed on social cohesion including intolerance and exclusion, flamed by misinformation and disinformation.



*Mr Speaker contributing to the general debate on 13 March.*

In his general debate contribution, Mr Speaker noted that over the last few years, ideologically motivated violent extremism – mostly nationalist and racist violent extremism comprised approximately 50 per cent of the Australian Intelligence



Organisation's domestic counter-terrorism caseload. He indicated that Australia's approach to countering violent extremism comprises of four key activities:

- building strength in diversity and social participation
- early intervention, disengagement and reintegration
- targeted work with vulnerable communities and institutions, and
- addressing terrorist propaganda online.

Reflecting on the cultural and ethnic diversity of the current Australian Parliament, Mr Speaker noted that a diverse parliament better reflects our society and adds legitimacy to our democratic process by encouraging greater engagement as well as respect for differing views. He drew particular attention to the importance of Parliamentary Friendship Groups which serve as informal, non-partisan groups of parliamentarians who come together to raise awareness of, or increase liaison with, a particular group, organisation, or issue.<sup>4</sup>

Senator Payman also contributed to the general debate during the session of Young Parliamentarians on 15 March. In her contribution, she emphasised the importance for the Australian Parliament in listening to the views of the more than three million young people in Australia who comprise over 15 per cent of the population. Drawing attention to the diversity of Australia's youth, Senator Payman noted that this diversity makes young Australians uniquely placed to inform government on how to build inclusive societies and address intolerance.



*Senator Payman contributing to the general debate on 15 March.*

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<sup>4</sup> Mr Speaker, General Debate speech, 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, <https://www.ipu.org/download/16692> (accessed 18 April 2023).

The general debate took place over three days and led to an outcome document, the Manama Declaration titled *Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance* which was endorsed by the Assembly on 15 March.<sup>5</sup> Under the Manama Declaration, the member parliaments recognise that the world is facing social and economic inequalities on an unprecedented scale. The member parliaments note that these inequalities and insecurities can give rise to anger and frustration while the dignity intrinsic in every person can be undermined by factors such as poverty, the denial of inalienable economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, violations of the rule of law, discrimination against women, lack of inclusion of youth, and the de facto exclusion from politics of the most vulnerable and marginalised.

In response to these challenges, the Manama Declaration states:

We can respond to these challenges by encouraging collaborative networks promoting dialogue and joint projects in service to the community, by creating channels for conflict prevention and mediation, by promoting moderation, by advancing education and awareness building, and by encouraging community and religious leaders to contribute to these objectives. We commit to speaking out against intolerance and especially any advocacy of hatred that constitutes discrimination, hostility or violence. We will also assist in the resolution of conflict through the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy.<sup>6</sup>

## Emergency Item

The IPU rules provide that any member country may propose a topic as an emergency item to be debated during an Assembly. The matter must relate to a major event of international concern on which it appears necessary for the IPU to express its opinion. The request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast to be accepted for debate.

During the Assembly, the following six proposals were submitted for consideration as the emergency item:

- The urgent need to combat violence against women in politics, particularly in light of the proliferation of hate speech, fake news and violent incidents (Argentina)

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<sup>5</sup> 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, Manama Declaration, Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance, Endorsed by the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, 15 March 2023, <https://www.ipu.org/file/16565/download> (accessed 29 March 2023).

<sup>6</sup> 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, Manama Declaration, Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance, Endorsed by the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, 15 March 2023, <https://www.ipu.org/file/16565/download> (accessed 29 March 2023).

- Criminalising contempt for religions and the spreading of hatred, and promoting coexistence, tolerance, peace and international security (Qatar)
- Raising awareness and calling for action on the serious humanitarian crises affecting the peoples of Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Yemen and other countries, and on the particular vulnerability of women and children (Argentina, Chile, Germany, Netherlands and Ukraine with the support of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) and 12 Plus Group)
- Combating Islamophobia, fighting intolerance eliminating racial discrimination, and promoting peaceful coexistence amongst peoples and religions (Indonesia)
- Creation of a global fund for countries vulnerable to the natural disasters to address loss and damage from climate change (African Group)
- Call for urgent action to stop aggression, occupation and massive human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity (Democratic Republic of Congo)

The Indonesian delegation withdrew its proposal, indicating its support for the proposal of Qatar. A roll call vote was taken regarding the five proposals with the proposal from the 12 Plus Group and GRULAC regarding serious humanitarian crisis securing the required two-thirds majority of the vote. That resolution was adopted on 14 March by the Assembly.<sup>7</sup>

Under the resolution, the member parliaments acknowledge that 90 per cent of the world's humanitarian needs are concentrated in 20 countries, which combined, represent no more than 13 per cent of the world's population and 1.6 per cent of global GDP. The resolution draws attention to the plight of Afghans, and in particular, women and girls who are excluded from secondary and university education. It recognises the humanitarian crisis and suffering in Ukraine and Yemen where over 20 million people require humanitarian assistance, as well as the plight of people in Syria and South Sudan.

Acknowledging the high number of displaced persons around the world, the resolution provides 24 action points and matters for the consideration of member

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<sup>7</sup> Resolution – Raising awareness and calling for action on the serious humanitarian crises affecting the peoples of Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Yemen and other countries, and on the particular vulnerability of women and children, Resolution adopted by 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, 14 March 2023, <https://www.ipu.org/file/16567/download> (accessed 30 March 2023).

parliaments. These include speaking out against, and exerting political and diplomatic pressure on, those who bear responsibility for humanitarian crises, and to offer support to affected populations.

## Governing Council

The Governing Council (GC) is the administrative and policy making body of the IPU and ordinarily meets during the twice-yearly assemblies.

During the 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly, the 211<sup>th</sup> session of the GC was held across two meetings on 12 and 15 March 2023. At the first meeting, 142 members of the GC were present to elect the Speaker of the Council of Representatives of the Bahrain Parliament as President of the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly.

During the first meeting, the GC also approved the membership of Liberia to the IPU. Liberia was one of the founding members of the IPU in 1889. Its membership had lapsed in 2011. The GC also welcomed the participation of a high-level delegation from Kiribati in an observer capacity in view of a possible future IPU membership.

In an impact report to the GC, the Secretary General highlighted the reach of the IPU over the review period:

- Production of 26 publications for parliamentarians in 11 languages.
- In relation to the endorsement of the common principles of support for parliamentarians, coverage of national parliaments had increased to 76 per cent, compared to 69 per cent in 2021.
- In terms of global reach, 17,000 people watched the 145<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Kigali compared to 10,000 people who watched the 144<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Nusa Dua.

The Secretary General informed the meeting that the proportion of young parliamentarians attending IPU assemblies had increased to 25 per cent in 2022. At the same time, the proportion of women MPs attending IPU assemblies had increased to 37 per cent in 2022.

In his report on activities, IPU President, Mr Duarte Pacheco focused on initiatives underway to promote the IPU and give it greater international visibility. To this end, since the 210<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GC in Kigali, Mr Pacheco has visited over 20 countries, speaking at various forums including conferences and to university students and holding more than 95 meetings.

Mr Pacheco also reported that an IPU anthem had been commissioned and will be officially played for the first time at the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Luanda, Angola.

The Governing Council approved the next two IPU Assemblies as follows:

- 147<sup>th</sup> Assembly: Luanda, Angola from 23-27 October 2023
- 148<sup>th</sup> Assembly: Geneva, Switzerland from 23-27 March 2024

## Meeting of geopolitical groups

The IPU has six geopolitical groups:

- Asia-Pacific Group – comprising 36 members including Australia.
- Twelve Plus Group – comprising 47 members including Australia, Canada and New Zealand.
- Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) – comprising 24 member countries.
- Africa Group – comprising 51 members.
- Arab Group – comprising 21 members.

The geopolitical groups meet immediately prior to and during the Assembly to consider IPU agenda items and, where possible, agree a group position. Candidates for positions on IPU committees are also considered and submitted through geopolitical groups.

Most member countries are members of at least one geopolitical group. Australia is a member of two geopolitical groups – the Asia-Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group.<sup>8</sup>

### Asia-Pacific Group

In 2023, Australia became the Chair of the Asia-Pacific Group (APG). In its capacity as Chair, Australia called a meeting of the APG for 11 March 2023. The meeting was chaired by Mr Speaker on behalf of the Australian delegation.

During the meeting, briefings from APG members of the IPU Executive Committee were received. The APG also considered a report of the ASEAN+3 Group meeting and the IPU President, Mr Pacheco addressed the meeting.

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<sup>8</sup> The IPU Statutes stipulate that members that belong to more than one geopolitical group should indicate which geopolitical group they represent for the purposes of submitting candidatures for positions within the IPU. Australia usually exercises these rights through the Asia-Pacific Group.

The APG also nominated candidates to fill 12 vacancies on seven IPU bodies. These positions were filled with APG-endorsed candidates from nine member country representatives from across the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia with Senator Reynolds endorsed by the APG to fill a vacancy on the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.



*The IPU President addressing the APG meeting chaired by Mr Speaker on 11 March.*

In his capacity as Chair of the APG, Mr Speaker attended the Joint Meeting of the Chairpersons of Geopolitical Groups and Presidents of Standing Committees on 11 March where he provided an update to the group on the activities of the APG.



*Mr Entsch MP, Dr Reid MP, Senator Reynolds and Senator Payman at the APG meeting.*

On 15 March, Mr Speaker presented an update to the General Assembly on the work of the APG in his capacity as APG Chair. In his update, Mr Speaker informed the General Assembly of his intention to work closely with all members of the APG to ensure that they all have an equal opportunity to engage in the IPU Assembly and fully represent the issues and challenges of their peoples and regions. He noted in this regard that with climate change a significant challenge for the region, the participation of the Pacific Islander members of the APG, who face a climate emergency, was more important than ever.



*Mr Speaker addressing the General Assembly as Chair of the APG on 15 March.*

### Twelve Plus Group

The Twelve Plus Group met on four occasions during the Assembly from 10 to 14 March 2023. During the respective meetings, the geopolitical group considered the draft resolutions before the Assembly.

At its meeting on 12 March, the Twelve Plus Group voted on candidates to fill various vacancies on IPU bodies. Senator Reynolds and Dr Reid served as scrutineers for the ballot alongside delegates from Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom.



*Senator Reynolds and Dr Reid MP scrutinizing elections at the 12 March Twelve Plus Group.*

## Forum of Women Parliamentarians

The Forum of Women Parliamentarians met twice on 11 March and on 14 March to consider activities to advance gender equality and to elect members of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

As a body responsible to provide a gender perspective to draft resolutions, the Forum debated the draft resolutions on the agenda of the 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly and considered methods to place gender equality at the center of water security, climate resilience and peace sustainability initiatives.

At its meeting on 14 March, the forum elected members to the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians. At that meeting, Senator Reynolds was successfully elected to the Bureau where she will serve a four-year term.

In her capacity as a member of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, Senator Reynolds attended Bureau meetings on 14 March and 15 March. At the 14 March meeting, the Bureau appointed a new President and two Vice Presidents with Ms Cynthia Lopez Castro from Mexico voted in as President.



At its second meeting on 15 March, the Bureau considered the IPU's key objectives in relation to gender equality which include:

- Promoting democracy and promoting parity,
- Influential women MPs,
- Gender-sensitive parliaments, and
- Gender mainstreaming in the IPU.

## Standing Committees

There are four standing committees of the IPU. A summary of their activities during the 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly follows.

### Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

At the 145<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Kigali, Senator Reynolds put forward a proposal for a resolution on orphanage trafficking and tourism to the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. The committee endorsed the proposed resolution and appointed Senator Reynolds as Rapporteur to the 147<sup>th</sup> Assembly for this purpose.

At the committee meeting on 13 March, Senator Reynolds made the opening address on the proposed resolution on behalf of the Australian delegation after which the preparatory debate took place. During her presentation, Senator Reynolds noted the need to address the trafficking and enslavement of millions of vulnerable children in so-called orphanages, few of which are state registered. She explained that the vast majority of these children are not orphans but rather vulnerable children, recruited from their families, trafficked into group homes and given new 'paper' identities, and trained to provide 'orphanage experiences' for volunteers, donors, and tourists. She continued:

This exploitation is thriving due – on the one hand – the almost complete lack of due diligence by donors on the charities and the facilities – and on the other hand – is the skill of criminals to deliver the perfect orphanage experience for visitors, one tailor-made for Instagram and provide a sugar hit of happiness to volunteers and donors.

At its core, this is an issue of demand and supply – our demand to help orphans and the supply of children to meet the demand. [Click here](#), donate or visit, and we will take care of the rest.

The result – millions of Instagram photos of volunteers and tourists playing with children they don't know and can't speak with.

Noting that orphanage trafficking is a matter of demand and supply, Senator Reynolds indicated that if the demand is cut, the supply will stop. To this end, she explained that the starting point is to educate donors and volunteers that they must do more due diligence and provide guidance on how to be a smarter volunteer and donor. Senator Reynolds concluded by noting that parliamentarians can work together with citizens, governments, and the UN to end this form of trafficking and slavery by changing the behaviour of donors and providing better care and support for vulnerable children and their families.



*Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights Rapporteur to the 147<sup>th</sup> Assembly, Senator Reynolds making opening remarks on a proposed resolution on orphanage trafficking.*

There were a significant number of contributions to the debate on the proposed resolution and in response to Senator Reynolds’ opening address. In total, 28 representatives from member countries contributed to the debate on the proposed resolution. At the conclusion of the debate, the proposed resolution was unanimously endorsed by the committee.

Senator Reynolds and fellow Rapporteur, Mr Ernesto Bustamante, Peru will prepare the draft resolution on orphanage trafficking and tourism, taking account of the views expressed by member countries at the meeting, for debate and endorsement at the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in October 2023.

## Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security met on four occasions from 12 to 14 March to debate and adopt a draft resolution titled *Cybercrimes: The new risks to global security*.

The Assembly formally adopted the cybercrime resolution by consensus on 15 March.<sup>9</sup> Under the resolution, the Assembly noted the need for a global approach to the issue of cybercrime and its serious consequences for citizens, as well as the need to protect global peace, security and economic stability while upholding the basic tenets of human rights. The resolution provides 26 action and consideration points for member states including urging parliaments to ensure that human rights impact assessments are embedded in all legislative processes on cybercrime.

## Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development met on three occasions during the Assembly to consider a draft resolution titled *Parliamentary efforts in achieving negative carbon emission balances of forests* and other matters. The resolution was subsequently considered and formally adopted by the Assembly on 15 March.<sup>10</sup>

The resolution provides 24 action and consideration points for member parliaments. Member parliaments and their governments are urged to provide national regulations and laws that commit to the objective of net zero deforestation and to intensify urgent actions to prevent and halt deforestation and forest degradation.

## Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

The Standing Committee on United Nations (UN) Affairs met twice during the Assembly to consider new modalities and methods of work. The committee's role is to assist parliamentarians to oversee their governments at the UN by better understanding the way in which the UN works at the political and operational level.

During the Assembly, the committee agreed to a series of working methods in light of a new mandate focused on five distinct areas of work which includes mobilising parliaments to improve the gender balance of the UN General Assembly.

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<sup>9</sup> Cybercrimes: The new risks to global security, Resolution adopted by consensus by the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, 15 March 2023, <https://www.ipu.org/file/16569/download> (accessed 30 March 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Parliamentary efforts in achieving negative carbon emission balances of forests, Resolution adopted by consensus by the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, 15 March 2023, <https://www.ipu.org/file/16571/download> (accessed 30 March 2023).

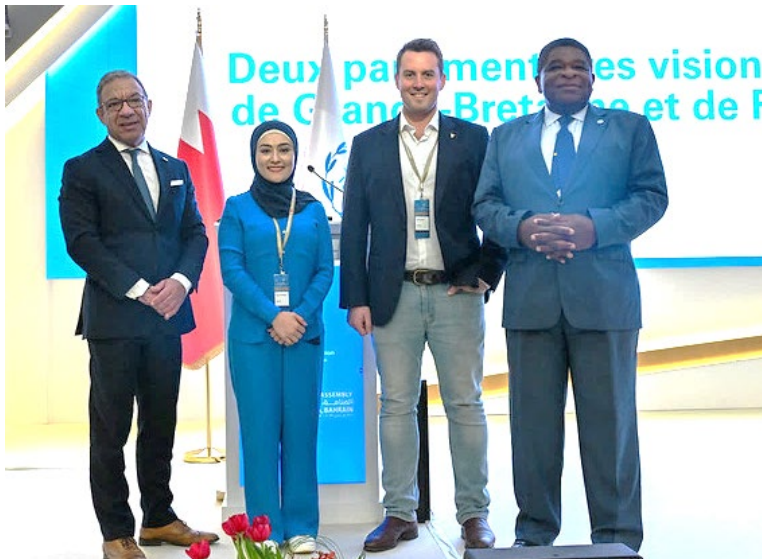
## Other meetings

In addition to the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and the four standing committees a number of other subsidiary bodies to the IPU met during the Assembly including:

- Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
- Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians
- Committee on Middle East Questions
- Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
- Gender Partnership Group
- Advisory Group on Health
- Group of Facilitators for Cyprus
- High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

## Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU

The Forum of Young Parliamentarians met on 12 March to appoint its members to the Bureau of Young Parliamentarians. The forum considered the draft resolutions before the 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly from a youth perspective and debated the respective matters.



*Senator Payman and Dr Reid MP with the IPU President, Mr Pacheco and IPU Secretary General, Mr Chungong.*

## Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL Committee) met on 14 March and was briefed on recent developments with regard to specific IHL concerns and the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Ukraine. The committee also considered recent developments with regard to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and was briefed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on recent developments with regard to cluster munitions.

Senator Deborah O'Neill was elected to the IHL Committee at the 142nd IPU Assembly in May 2021 as a representative of the Asia-Pacific Group for a four-year term.

Senator O'Neill attended the meeting of the IHL Committee via videoconference and Dr Reid attended the meeting as a substitute observer.

Prior to the Assembly on 2 March 2023, the IPU published a news article titled Celebrating 10 women MPs who are active on IPU committees.<sup>11</sup> Senator O'Neill was named in the article as one of the 10 MPs in light of her work as a member of the IHL Committee.



*IPU News in Brief: Celebrating 10 women MPs who are active on IPU committees.*

## Working Group on Better Implementation of IPU Resolutions

Senator Reynolds is serving on the Working Group on Better Implementation of IPU Resolutions. In that capacity, she attended a meeting of the group on 11 March.

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<sup>11</sup> IPU, Celebrating 10 women MPs who are active on IPU committees, <https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2023-03/celebrating-10-women-mps-who-are-active-ipu-committees> (Accessed 18 April 2023)

## Bilateral and multilateral meetings

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

The opportunities for informal discussions are complemented with bilateral meetings and multilateral meetings. During the 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly, the Australian delegation met with the delegation from Ukraine on 11 March.

The delegation held 11 other bilateral meetings with Asia-Pacific Group member delegations, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Lao, Singapore and Thailand.



*Senator Payman, Senator Reynolds and Mr Speaker with Mr Oleksandr Korniyenko, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Ukraine who presented the artwork of a Ukrainian child.*

## Other functions

The delegation attended a reception hosted by the Twelve Plus Group on 10 March. The delegation attended the inaugural ceremony on the evening of 11 March. On 12 March, Mr Speaker attended a lunch for Speakers of Parliament and on 13 March, the delegation attended an evening function hosted by the Rtd Hon Karen Bradley MP, Chair of the British Group of the IPU and UK Ambassador to Bahrain, Roderick Drummond.

Each of these gatherings and events provided further opportunities for the Australian delegation to continue discussions with a wide range of parliamentary colleagues.



*Senator Payman, Mr Speaker and Mr Entsch MP meeting with the Thailand delegation to the IPU led by Senator the Hon Pikulkeaw Krairiksh on 13 March.*

## Acknowledgements and concluding remarks

The Australian delegation was extremely busy during the 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly and acknowledges the valuable support provided to it during this time.

Mr Jason Moore, Second Secretary and Vice Consul at the Australian Embassy in Saudi Arabia joined the delegation in Manama. The delegation thanks the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Mr Mark Donovan and Mr Moore for their support to the delegation. The delegation also thanks the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, Ms Heidi Venamore PSM and Ms Petra Aitken, Visits and Public Diplomacy for assisting the delegation in Dubai.

The delegation also wishes to acknowledge the work of staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Canberra who provided background briefing materials including Ms Jennifer Groch who coordinated the provision of the materials. In addition to the briefings provided by DFAT, the delegation also thanks the following departments for briefing materials:

- Attorney-General's Department,
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water,
- Department of Home Affairs,
- Department of Social Services, and
- Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Parliamentary Library also provided briefing materials to the delegation which were extremely helpful and informative. The delegation acknowledges the work of Mr Nigel Brew and his colleagues at the Parliamentary Library for providing this material and thanks them for it.

The delegation appreciates the assistance and support of the International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO). Ms Aleshia Westgate and Ms Kim Bulman arranged travel and accommodation and provided ongoing support while the delegation was in Bahrain. The delegation thanks them for their support.

Finally, the delegation would like to acknowledge the efforts of Ms Elise Williamson and the delegation secretary, Dr Jane Thomson who accompanied the delegation to support its work.

The Hon Milton Dick MP

Delegation Leader