



PARLIAMENT
OF AUSTRALIA

Australian Parliamentary Delegation

Tashkent, Uzbekistan
5 – 9 April 2025

150th Assembly of the
Inter-Parliamentary Union

REPORT | JULY 2025



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Contents

Members of the Delegation	1
Leader of the Delegation	1
Delegates	1
Officials	1
150th IPU Assembly – Tashkent, Uzbekistan	2
Events prior to the 150th Assembly	3
Highlights of Australia’s contribution at the Assembly	4
Background	4
150 th Assembly	5
Debates at the assembly	6
General Debate	6
Emergency Item	8
Governing Council	9
Executive Committee	12
Meetings of Geopolitical Groups	14
Asia-Pacific Group	14
Twelve Plus Group	14
Forum of Women Parliamentarians	15
Standing Committees	17
Standing Committee on Peace and International Security	18
Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	19
Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights	20
Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs	22
Other committees and activities	22
Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law	23
Committee on the Human Right of Parliamentarians	24
Liaison with other delegations	26
Other functions	27
Acknowledgements and concluding remarks	27

Members of the Delegation

Leader of the Delegation

- Senator Deborah O'Neill

Delegates

- Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC

Officials

- Ms Claressa Surtees, Clerk, House of Representatives
- Dr Jane Thomson, Delegation Secretary

150th IPU Assembly – Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The 150th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from 5 to 9 April 2025. The overall theme of the assembly was: *Parliamentary action for social development and justice*.

The assembly was attended by delegations from 129 Member Parliaments. Of 1,297 delegates, 697 were Members of Parliament (MPs) including more than 90 Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Parliament. Women MPs comprised over 37 per cent of parliamentarians at the assembly, their highest representation at an assembly since 2022.¹

In accordance with contemporary practice, the 150th Assembly was an in-person event with adaptations for hybrid participation. In addition, the proceedings of the inaugural ceremony, Forum of Women Parliamentarians, general debate and all sittings of the Governing Council were live streamed.

The Australian delegation was led by Senator Deborah O'Neill, Senator for New South Wales and included Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, Senator for Western Australia.



Australian delegation to the 150th IPU Assembly

¹ IPU, Parliamentarians champion social development and justice at Tashkent Assembly, *Press release*, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2025-04/parliamentarians-champion-social-development-and-justice-tashkent-assembly> (accessed 16 April 2025).

Events prior to the 150th Assembly

Prior to the assembly, the Australian delegation played a key role in several important IPU events as follows:

- On 28 March, the Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker for the House of Representatives (Mr Speaker) in his capacity as Chair presided over a meeting of the IPU Sub-Committee on Finance and participated in the final sitting of the IPU Working Group on Transparency, Accountability and Openness on the same day.
- On 24 March, Mr Speaker as Chair of the IPU Sub-Committee on Finance presided over a meeting with IPU auditors.
- On 18 March, Mr Speaker moderated an IPU webinar titled, *Engaging young people to improve democracy: How can political leaders empower and provide young people with the opportunities to have their say?*²
- On 6 March, Senator Reynolds served on an IPU webinar panel focused on legislative strategies to end orphanage trafficking.³ The event was one of three focused on implementing an IPU resolution adopted in October 2023 titled, *Orphanage trafficking: The role of parliaments in reducing harm.*⁴
- On 4 March, the IPU published a podcast in which Senator Reynolds discusses the role of parliaments in addressing orphanage trafficking.⁵
- On 3 March, the IPU published an opinion piece written by Senator Reynolds titled, 'Orphanage trafficking: The hidden crisis aided by good intentions.'⁶

² IPU, Engaging youth in democracy: empowering the next generation, IPU Webinar, 18 March 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/event/engaging-youth-in-democracy-empowering-next-generation> (accessed 16 April 2025).

³ IPU, Legislative Strategies to end orphanage trafficking, IPU Webinar, 6 March 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/event/legislative-strategies-end-orphanage-trafficking> (accessed 16 April 2025).

⁴ IPU, *Orphanage trafficking: The role of parliaments in reducing harm*, Resolution adopted by consensus by the 147th IPU Assembly, (Luanda, 27 October 2023) <https://www.ipu.org/file/17872/download> (accessed 16 April 2025).

⁵ IPU on air conversations about parliamentary action: Orphanage trafficking: the hidden crisis aided by good intentions, <https://www.ipu.org/knowledge/ipu-air-conversations-about-parliamentary-action> (accessed 16 April 2025).

⁶ IPU, 'Orphanage trafficking: The hidden crisis aided by good intentions', Opinion piece by Senator Linda Reynolds, <https://www.ipu.org/news/voices-and-videos/2025-03/orphanage-trafficking-hidden-crisis-aided-good-intentions> (accessed 16 April 2025).

Highlights of Australia's contribution at the Assembly

- Senator O'Neill represented Mr Speaker as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance to the Executive Committee as well as on the Executive Committee. In that capacity, Senator O'Neill provided the finance report to the Executive Committee, General Assembly and to both the Twelve Plus and Asia-Pacific geopolitical groups on Mr Speaker's behalf.
- Senator Reynolds further implemented an orphanage trafficking action plan by facilitating a discussion on implementation of the 2023 resolution on orphanage trafficking hosted by the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights.
- Senator O'Neill served as President of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, presiding over committee meetings and debates and reporting to the assembly on the committee's activities.
- Senator Reynolds served as Rapporteur to a Forum of Women debate on the draft resolution for a two-State solution as a proposed approach to resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- Senator O'Neill presented a proposal for a future resolution on tax avoidance to the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development which was supported by the committee.
- Senator O'Neill served on a panel focused on harnessing religious and ethical values to advance parliamentary dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

Background

The IPU is an international organisation of national parliaments. The IPU promotes democratic governance, institutions and values, working with parliaments and parliamentarians to articulate and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. It works for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.

Founded in 1889, the IPU comprises Member Parliaments and Associate Members. At the 150th Assembly, Belize became the 181st Member Parliament of the IPU. The

14 Associate Members are mostly parliaments drawn from groups of nations or similar bodies.⁷

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

1. Building effective and empowered parliaments
2. Promoting inclusive and representative parliaments
3. Supporting resilient and innovative parliaments
4. Catalysing collective parliamentary action
5. Strengthening the IPU's accountability.⁸

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body of the IPU and brings together parliamentarians to consider international issues and make recommendations for action. In accordance with its mandate to promote democracy, the IPU hosts events throughout the year. The Australian delegation participates in some of these events remotely. However, the major focus of the delegation in relation to the IPU is participation in the twice-yearly assemblies.

150th Assembly

The 150th Assembly was formally opened on 5 April 2025. The assembly's agenda included the following business:

- General debate culminating in the Tashkent Declaration: *Parliamentary action for social development and justice*.⁹
- Resolution: *The role of parliaments in advancing a two-State solution in Palestine*.¹⁰
- Resolution: *Parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-lasting impacts of conflicts, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development*.¹¹
- Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item on the agenda.

⁷ IPU, Associate Members, <https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/members/associate-members> (accessed 16 April 2025).

⁸ IPU, 2022-2026 Strategy, <https://www.ipu.org/file/13678/download> (accessed 16 April 2025).

⁹ Tashkent Declaration – Parliamentary action for social development and justice, Endorsed by the 150th IPU Assembly, Tashkent, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21429/download> (accessed 15 April 2025).

¹⁰ Resolution – The role of parliaments in advancing a two-State solution in Palestine, Resolution adopted by consensus by the 150th IPU Assembly, Tashkent, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21431/download> (accessed 15 April 2025).

¹¹ Resolution – Parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-lasting impact of conflicts, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development, Resolution adopted by consensus by the 150th IPU Assembly, Tashkent, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21433/download> (accessed 15 April 2025).

- Reports of standing committees and IPU specialist meetings.
- Adoption of amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules.

On 7 April, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Hon Shavkat Mirziyoyev addressed the assembly in a special plenary session.¹² President of the Senate of Uzbekistan, Senator the Hon Tanzila Narbaeva served as the President of the 150th assembly.

Debates at the assembly

General Debate

The theme of the general debate at the assembly was *Parliamentary action for social development and justice*.

Senator O'Neill contributed to the general debate on behalf of the Australian delegation.¹³ In her contribution, Senator O'Neill highlighted the importance of gender equality for social development and justice:

Any social contract should have equality at its heart and a key aspect of such equality is equal pay. In Australia, equal pay for equal work has been law since 1969. However, challenges remain. We still have a gender pay gap in the average earnings of men and women. Last year, however, Australia's gender pay gap reached its lowest in our history at 11.5 per cent.

In 2023, Parliament introduced legislation with bipartisan support to require individual employers to publish information on gender pay gaps and introduce new gender equality standards to bridge the gap. Making employers accountable and transparent in their practices has encouraged this cultural shift.

¹² Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Hon Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 150th IPU Assembly of the IPU, <https://www.ipu.org/download/21445> (accessed 15 April 2025).

¹³ Senator O'Neill, general debate speech, 150th IPU Assembly, <https://www.ipu.org/download/21467> (accessed 17 April 2025).



Senator O'Neill contributing to the general debate on social development and justice

Focusing on the importance of economic fairness, Senator O'Neill also noted that taxation can contribute to addressing inequality. She drew particular attention to the significant challenges for government in relation to multinational tax avoidance, explaining the consequences for social development and economic fairness:

Multinational tax avoidance means that governments have less funds available for schools, hospitals and other public services. It goes directly against the principle of a 'fair go' as small businesses face unfair competition from larger multinationals that can avoid paying their fair share of tax.¹⁴

Senator Reynolds also contributed to the general debate on behalf of the Australian delegation. She focused on the importance of respectful behaviour and robust debate at the IPU. Reflecting on the 150th Assembly, she said that in some instances, such behaviour didn't reflect the principles of the IPU. In other instances, such as that on display at the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, Senator Reynolds noted that the best of the IPU could be seen in the form of respectful behaviour, meaningful resolutions and outcomes consistent with the theme of the general debate, complemented by practical follow-up and cooperative action on the part of parliamentarians committed to engaging in global reform.

¹⁴ Senator O'Neill, general debate speech, 150th IPU Assembly, <https://www.ipu.org/download/21467> (accessed 17 April 2025).



Senator Reynolds contributing to the general debate on social development and justice

Following the general debate, the Tashkent Declaration on the same theme was adopted by the assembly on 9 April.¹⁵ In the declaration, the IPU highlights that the global social development agenda, initiated 30 years ago, has only been partially realised. It calls for a policy reset to balance market demands with the needs of the people, focusing on three key areas:

- investing in people to lift them from poverty to prosperity;
- democratizing the economy to benefit those who historically have been deprived of their fair share, particularly women and youth; and
- strengthening institutions, including through broad participation in the regulation of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence.

To this end, parliaments are urged to develop national plans for social development and engage in debates ahead of the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, Qatar in November 2025.¹⁶

Emergency Item

In the leadup to consideration of an emergency item on the IPU agenda, Australia and several other members of the Twelve Plus Group raised concerns regarding the prospect of a second emergency debate. It had been proposed that a trial take place

¹⁵ Tashkent Declaration, *Parliamentary action for social development*, endorsed by the 150th IPU Assembly, Tashkent, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21429/download> (accessed 15 April 2025).

¹⁶ Second World Summit for Social Development, 4-6 November 2025, Doha, Qatar, <https://social.desa.un.org/world-summit-2025> (accessed 16 April 2025).

whereby the assembly conduct a second emergency debate if a second emergency proposal achieved the required two-thirds majority vote. However, during discussions in the plenary, questions regarding the validity of the trial under the IPU Statutes and Rules remained. As it became clear that the proposition didn't enjoy adequate support from the plenary, the proposal for a trial was withdrawn.

There were four proposals for the emergency item as follows:

- Request submitted by the delegations of Chile and Peru titled, 'Advancing global economic cooperation: Reducing tariffs and combating protectionism'.¹⁷
- Request submitted by the delegations Philippines and Thailand, titled 'Parliamentary diplomacy to promote peace and address the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar'.
- Request submitted by the delegations of Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Jordan and Egypt with the support of the Arab Group and the African Group titled, 'The need for urgent action on the recent violation of the ceasefire agreement by Israel in Palestine, the escalating conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, and the compounding effects of global warming'.
- Request submitted by the delegation of Israel titled, 'Ending the double standard: Calling on the international community to accept refugees from Gaza instead of exploiting them to attack Israel'.

When the emergency items were considered, Israel withdrew its proposal, leaving the first three proposals for consideration. However, all three of the remaining proposals were unable to secure the required two-thirds majority of votes cast by Member Parliaments and the IPU was not able to proceed with an emergency debate for the third time in its history.¹⁸

Governing Council

The Governing Council is the administrative and policy making body of the IPU and ordinarily meets twice during assemblies.

¹⁷ 150th IPU Assembly, Emergency Items, <https://www.ipu.org/event/150th-ipu-assembly-and-related-meetings#event-sub-page-36249/> (accessed 16 April 2025).

¹⁸ The first time that an emergency debate did not take place, as no proposal received the required two-thirds majority support, was at the 147th IPU Assembly in October 2023 in Luanda, Angola. The second time was at the 148th IPU Assembly in March 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Governing Council met on 6 and 9 April 2025. During the 215th session of the Governing Council on 6 April, IPU President, Dr Tulia Ackson opened the meeting and provided an overview of her activities over the past six months.¹⁹ Since October 2024, the President had represented the IPU at various high-level global meetings including:

- 10th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20), November 2024, Brasilia.
- 18th Meeting of the Bureau of East African Community Speakers of National Legislatures and the East African Legislative Assembly, November 2024, Nairobi.
- IPU Parliamentary Meeting at the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), November 2024, Baku.
- Visit to Qatar to discuss a commitment to parliamentary democracy between the Shura Council of Qatar and the IPU, November 2024, Doha.
- Third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, February 2025, New York.
- Annual IPU Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, February 2025, New York.
- Annual IPU – UN Women Parliamentary Meeting at the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, March 2025, New York.
- IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians, March 2025, Mexico City.
- European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of the Council of Europe, March 2025, Strasbourg.

On 6 April, the Governing Council also received a finance briefing from Senator O'Neill, representing Mr Speaker as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance.

¹⁹ Report of the President on her activities since the 214th session of the Governing Council, April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21346/download> (accessed 16 April 2025).



Senator O'Neill delivering the IPU finance report to the Governing Council

In his report to the Governing Council on 9 April, IPU Secretary General, Mr Martin Chungong noted that 152 out of 190 national parliaments had endorsed the IPU's Common Principles for Support to Parliaments. He indicated that throughout 2024, the IPU had organised 78 events including two assemblies as well as 38 national capacity-building activities. In addition to these events, the IPU produced a range of publications and materials including resources to navigate technological advances such as:

- A landmark resolution, *The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on democracy, human rights and the rule of law*, which provides a blueprint for parliaments to harness AI responsibility while mitigating its risks through robust legal frameworks.²⁰
- A new *Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology*, which establishes a regulatory framework to ensure that science and technology benefit humanity, society and the environment.²¹

The Secretary General brought attention to the 956 human rights cases before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. He expressed concern

²⁰ The resolution and IPU tools to harness the potential of AI in Parliament are on the IPU website at: <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2024-12/new-ipu-tools-harness-potential-ai-in-parliament> (accessed 16 April 2025).

²¹ IPU, *Impact Report 2024*, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2025-04/impact-report-2024> (accessed 16 April 2025).

that this number represents an increase in the committee's caseload of 25 per cent since 2023.

During its meetings, the Governing Council agreed to a series of amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules, primarily focused on ensuring a gender balance in terms of representation across the IPU's committee system.

In terms of outreach, the Secretary General highlighted the following statistics from the IPU Impact Report 2024:

- 32,000 contacts on the IPU's database
- 1,995 changemakers have committed to the IPU's youth campaign, *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!*
- 825,000 views of the IPU's videos on YouTube, representing an increase of 32 per cent compared to 2023.²²

The Governing Council also approved the dates for forthcoming events and the 151st and 152nd assemblies as follows:

- 151st IPU Assembly – Geneva, 19 to 23 October 2025
- 152nd IPU Assembly – Geneva, 22 to 26 March 2026.²³

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee oversees the administration of the IPU and makes recommendations to the Governing Council, assesses candidates for the position of Secretary General and proposes the IPU's annual work program and budget.

The Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker for the House of Representatives serves on the IPU Executive Committee on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group. He is also Chairperson of the Executive Committee's Sub-Committee on Finance.

Senator O'Neill represented Mr Speaker on the Executive Committee, which met over two days during the assembly. Senator O'Neill also represented Mr Speaker as the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee of Finance.²⁴ In that capacity, she provided a finance update to the Executive Committee, Governing Council and various

²² IPU, *Impact Report 2024*, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2025-04/impact-report-2024> (accessed 16 April 2025).

²³ Details of IPU events in 2025 can be found at: <https://www.ipu.org/events/current-and-future-events>.

²⁴ Information about the Sub-Committee on Finance can be found at: <https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/structure-and-governance/executive-committee/sub-committee-finance>.

geopolitical groups. Mr Speaker also serves on the Working Group on Transparency, Accountability and Openness.²⁵

During meetings on 2 and 3 April, the Executive Committee considered arrangements for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament due to take place in New York from 29 to 31 July 2025, preceded by the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament.²⁶ The IPU Speakers Conference Preparatory Committee, of which Mr Speaker is a member, provided an update on preparations for the conference.

The Executive Committee also confirmed the procedure to appoint a new IPU Secretary General in accordance with the IPU Statutes and Rules. The term of the current incumbent, Mr Martin Chungong, is due to expire on 30 June 2026 and the newly appointed Secretary General will take up the position from 1 July 2026.

The Executive Committee also held elections for the position of IPU Vice-President with the retirement of Mr A.R. Al Nuaimi, UAE. Ms G. Morawska-Stanecka, Poland was appointed as Vice President. For the first time in IPU history, all vice-presidency positions of the IPU across all geopolitical groups are now held by women.



IPU Executive Committee including Senator O'Neill, representing Mr Speaker

²⁵ Information about the Working Group can be found at: <https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/structure-and-governance/executive-committee/working-group-transparency-accountability-and-openness>.

²⁶ IPU, Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, 29 to 31 July 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/event/sixth-world-conference-speakers-parliament> (accessed 17 April 2025).

Meetings of Geopolitical Groups

Most IPU Member Parliaments are affiliated with one or more of the six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU:

- Africa Group – comprising 52 members
- Arab Group – comprising 20 members
- Asia-Pacific Group – comprising 36 members
- Eurasia Group – comprising 10 members
- Group of Latin America and the Caribbean – comprising 27 members
- Twelve Plus Group – comprising 47 members

The geopolitical groups meet immediately prior to and during assemblies to consider IPU agenda items and, where possible, agree a group position. Candidates for vacancies 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 the Asia-Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group.²⁷

Asia-Pacific Group

The Asia-Pacific Group (APG) met on 5 April to consider vacancies to IPU positions and the debates of the assembly.

The meeting was addressed by the IPU President, Dr Ackson who provided an update on her activities over the previous six months and answered questions from the floor. Senator O'Neill also briefed the APG on the activities and meetings of the Executive Committee and provided the finance report.

Twelve Plus Group

The Twelve Plus Group met on four occasions during the assembly from 4 April. During its meetings, the members considered the debates of the assembly, appointed delegates to IPU vacancies, and discussed proposals for future resolutions.

²⁷ 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 this right through the Asia-Pacific Group.

The IPU President, Dr Ackson also addressed the Twelve Plus Group on 4 April where concerns were raised in relation to the prospect of a second emergency item at the assembly.

The Twelve Plus Group also discussed the rising number of cases before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The 956 cases before the committee include the entire parliamentary opposition in Myanmar and 68 opposition members of parliament in Türkiye.²⁸ Individual members of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians also brought the attention of the Twelve Plus Group to growing concerns regarding the unwillingness on the part of some Member Parliaments to cooperate with the committee by attending its meetings, providing information and engaging with the committee in good faith.

Forum of Women Parliamentarians

The Forum of Women Parliamentarians met twice on 5 April and 8 April, to fill vacancies to positions and conduct debates. The Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, of which Senator Reynolds is a member, also met twice during the Assembly on 5 April and 9 April.

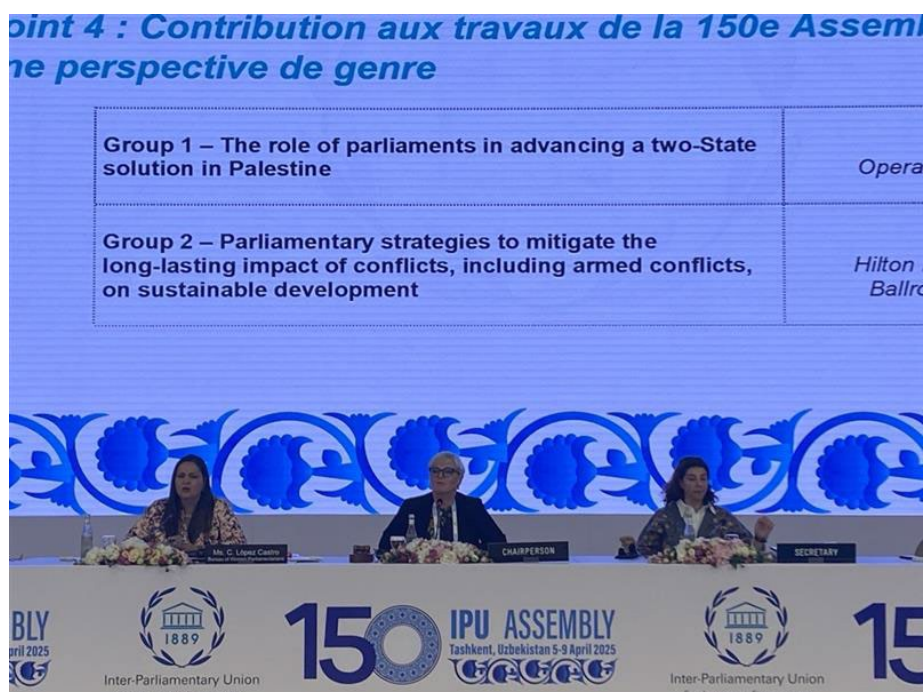
During the 150th Assembly, the Forum of Women celebrated its 40-year anniversary.²⁹ It also held a series of debates on matters before the IPU from a gender perspective including the two draft resolutions. Senator Reynolds served as the Rapporteur to the Forum of Women for its debate on the draft resolution, *The role of parliaments in advancing a two-State solution in Palestine*.

The forum also held a panel discussion on *Women shaping politics – Women’s global networking* on 5 April and filled vacancies on the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.³⁰

²⁸ Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, Decisions adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 215th session (Tashkent, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21643/download> (accessed 9 May 2025)).

²⁹ IPU, *40 years of action, 40 women of action*, launched by the IPU to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Forum of Women, <https://www.ipu.org/news/voices-and-videos/2025-04/40-years-action-40-women-action> (accessed 16 April 2025).

³⁰ Forum of Women Parliamentarians, *Women shaping politics – women’s global networking*, Panel discussion, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21275/download> (accessed 15 April 2025).



Senator Reynolds serving as Rapporteur to the Forum of Women

The Forum also marked the 30-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995. As part of the commemorations, the IPU produced a report on the last three decades of women in parliament which revealed that the number of seats held by women rose from 11.3 per cent in 1995 to 27.2 per cent in 2025.³¹ The Women in Parliament report states that the Australian Parliament has seen the “biggest gain in women’s representation in the Pacific region over the last 30 years” while also noting that Australia has also been “leading the way on addressing gender-based violence against women in parliament”.³²

The Forum also considered data produced by the IPU and UN Women earlier this year which revealed the limited progress towards gender equality in political leadership over that time. According to research undertaken by the IPU with UN Women, men outnumber women by more than three times in executive and legislative positions.³³ While the proportion of women in parliament has increased by

³¹ IPU, *Women in Parliament 1995-2025*, March 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2025-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2025> (accessed 1 May 2025).

³² IPU, *Women in Parliament 1995-2025*, March 2025, p. 14,

³³ IPU, *Women in Politics: 2025*, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2025-03/women-in-politics-2025> (accessed 16 April 2025).

0.3 percentage points to 27.2 per cent over the last 12 months, the number of women in government positions had decreased by 0.4 percentage points.

At the same time, a major study undertaken by the IPU in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) has revealed the “pervasive nature of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments across the Asia-Pacific region.”³⁴

In recognition of the fact that progress in relation to women’s representation in parliament has stalled in some countries while women’s rights have been rolled back in others, the IPU announced a new campaign for 2025. Titled, *Achieving gender equality, action by action*, the campaign emphasises the need for immediate action. It promotes 10 specific actions focused on three thematic areas:

1. Promoting parity in parliament and politics;
2. Encouraging gender-sensitive institutions; and
3. Combating gender-based violence and discrimination.³⁵

The first IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians took place in Mexico City from 14 to 15 March 2025. Attended by 380 parliamentarians from 56 countries, as well as representatives from the Government of Mexico, international organisations and civil society, the conference focused on the urgent need for gender parity in parliaments worldwide.³⁶ The second Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians is expected to take place in March 2026.

Standing Committees

In accordance with the IPU 2022–2026 Strategy adopted by the Governing Council, the Standing Committees of the IPU agreed to focus their work on specific areas. These focus areas provide a guide for the SCs when they are setting their agenda and workplan.

³⁴ IPU, Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in the Asia-Pacific region, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21204/download> (accessed 17 April 2025).

³⁵ IPU, Achieving Gender equality, action by action, <https://www.ipu.org/achieving-gender-equality-action-action> (accessed 17 April 2025).

³⁶ IPU, Global Conference on Women Parliamentarians Calls for Gender Parity in Parliament, *Press release*, 17 March 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2025-03/ipu-global-conference-women-parliamentarians-calls-gender-parity-in-parliament> (accessed 17 April 2025).

Standing Committee	Focus areas
Standing Committee on Peace and International Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. • Violent conflict prevention, crisis response and sustainable peace. • Improving multilateral management of peace and security challenges.
Standing Committee on Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change. • Sustainable development.
Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in the functioning of parliaments. • Democracy and human rights in the digital era. • A more inclusive, fairer world.

The Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs sets its agenda through a different process and adopts short motions and engages in campaigns.

Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security met on four occasions between 6 April and 8 April to fill vacancies on its bureau and to debate the draft resolution on a two-State solution including a significant number of proposed amendments to the draft resolution.

Following intense debate, the committee agreed to return to the original text drafted by an unprecedented six co-Rapporteurs representing each of the six geopolitical groups of the IPU. That proposed resolution was ultimately put before the assembly where it was adopted by consensus.³⁷

³⁷ IPU resolution: *The role of parliaments in advancing a two-State solution in Palestine*, Resolution adopted by consensus by the 150th IPU Assembly, Tashkent, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21431/download> (accessed 17 April 2025).



Senator Reynolds contributing to the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development met on 6, 7, and 8 April to consider the draft resolution on Parliamentary strategies to mitigate long-lasting impacts of conflict, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development. Following agreement on amendments during the committee stage, the proposed resolution was presented to the IPU Assembly where it was adopted by consensus.³⁸

At a meeting of the committee bureau on 8 April, Senator O'Neill presented a proposed theme for a future resolution titled, *Towards a fair global financial system: The role of parliaments in preventing corporate tax avoidance and achieving sustainable development*.

The committee subsequently accepted the proposal from Senator O'Neill with the incorporation of concepts and themes from a proposed emergency item advanced by delegations of Chile and Peru.

The draft title of the proposal is *Building a fair and sustainable global economy: The role of parliaments in combating protectionism, reducing tariffs and preventing corporate tax evasion*. The item will be the subject of a preparatory debate at the IPU's 151st Assembly in October 2025.

³⁸ IPU, *Parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-lasting impact of conflicts, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development*, Resolution adopted by consensus by the 150th IPU Assembly, Tashkent, 9 April 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21433/download> (accessed 14 April 2025).

Senator O'Neill, as co-Rapporteur to the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development will work with her fellow co-Rapporteurs, Mr J.M.R. Edwards, Chile and Ms J. Sabao, Zambia to draw on the issues raised during the October debate to develop a resolution for the committee's consideration and IPU's endorsement at its 152nd Assembly in March 2026.³⁹

Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

Senator O'Neill is a member of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, having been unanimously endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Group at the 149th Assembly for a two-year term ending in October 2026. She was also unanimously endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Group as the President of the committee for a term ending in October 2025.

As President, Senator O'Neill chaired several meetings of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and its bureau on 6, 7 and 8 April and provided the committee report to the assembly on 9 April. In her capacity as President of the committee, Senator O'Neill also attended the joint meeting of chairpersons and presidents of the IPU on 5 April 2025.



Senator O'Neill presiding over the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights Bureau meeting on 6 April 2025

³⁹ Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, <https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/structure-and-governance/assemblies/standing-committee-sustainable-development> (accessed 17 April 2025).

As the co-Rapporteur to the IPU's 2023 resolution on orphanage trafficking, Senator Reynolds provided an update to the committee on worldwide efforts to stop orphanage trafficking including through legislative reform on 7 April.

Drawing on the *Lawmaker's Guide to Stopping Orphanage Trafficking* produced by the Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking, Senator Reynolds informed the committee about legislative and other steps that parliamentarians can take to stop the practice of orphanage trafficking.⁴⁰

During its meetings, the committee also held a preparatory debate on its next resolution titled, *Recognising and supporting victims of illegal international adoption and taking measures to prevent this practice*.



Senator Reynolds presenting to the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

⁴⁰ Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking, *A Lawmaker's Guide to Stopping Orphanage Trafficking*, <https://taskforceonht.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ITHT-A-Practical-Guide-to-Stopping-Orphanage-Trafficking-Booklet-WEB.pdf> (accessed 16 April 2025).

Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

The Standing Committee on United Nations (UN) Affairs held two debates during the assembly as well as considering vacancies to positions. The two debates were as follows:

- The UN field presence in support of national development: The case of Uzbekistan
- The growing role of BRICS in international relations. What impact for the UN?

Other committees and activities

In addition to the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and the four standing committees, several other subsidiary bodies of the IPU met during the assembly, including:

- Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
- Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians
- Working Group on Better Implementation of IPU Resolutions
- Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
- Committee on the Middle East Question
- Gender Partnership Group
- Advisory Group on Health
- Group of Facilitators for Cyprus
- High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism
- Working Group on amendments to IPU Statutes and Rules

In addition, the following activities were held during the 150th Assembly:

- Panel discussion: Harnessing religious and ethical values to advance parliamentary dialogue and peaceful coexistence.
- Workshop: Reducing methane emissions: A critical pathway for addressing the climate crisis.
- Workshop: Beliefs and social norms: What impact on women's health?
- Workshop: Tackling weapons of mass destruction: A humanitarian perspective.
- Workshop: Enhancing parliamentary communication and advocacy for climate action.

- Workshop: Parliamentary diplomacy and mediation.

Senator O'Neill served on the panel on harnessing religious and ethical values to advance parliamentary dialogue and peaceful coexistence on 8 April 2025. Both members of the Australian delegation attended workshops where possible.



Senator O'Neill contributing to the panel discussion on harnessing religious and ethical values

Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) met on two occasions on 7 April in closed session and on 8 April in open session. During its meetings, the committee considered recent developments regarding specific IHL and refugee crisis situations including that of Myanmar where 19.9 million people, including 6.3 million children, need humanitarian assistance.

The committee also received an update on the humanitarian situation in Sudan which continues to deteriorate, especially since the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke out in April 2023. As of March 2025, there were 12.8 million forcibly displaced persons in Sudan, including nearly 8.8 million internally displaced persons and 3.7 million in neighbouring countries.

The situation in Afghanistan was also considered with particular attention given to the thousands of Afghan refugees who have been expelled from neighbouring countries since September 2023 and announcement by Iran to expel up to 2 million Afghans by March 2025. While overall security had improved in the country, human rights violations, economic instability, food insecurity and natural disasters continue to pose as the major humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan in 2025.

The committee also received a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia/Azerbaijan), Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia.

On 8 April, the committee held an open session on the topic of *The role of parliaments in tackling the effects of armed conflict on children*.⁴¹

Senator O'Neill's four-year term on the committee came to an end at the 150th Assembly.



Senator O'Neill contributing to the debate in the IHL Committee on 7 April 2025

Committee on the Human Right of Parliamentarians

In 1976, the IPU set up a procedure for the treatment of complaints regarding human rights violations of parliamentarians. It is the only international complaints

⁴¹ IPU, *The role of parliaments in tackling the effects of armed conflict on children*, Concept note, IHL Open session, <https://www.ipu.org/file/21291/download> (accessed 16 April 2025).

mechanism with a specific mandate to defend the human rights of persecuted parliamentarians worldwide. The IPU entrusted the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (CHRP) with implementing this procedure.

The committee seeks to protect and defend MPs who face abuse, mistreatment and even death by holding hearings, undertaking missions, and sending trial observers. The most common violations against MPs include attacks on freedom of expression, suspension or loss of parliamentary mandate, threats, intimidation, torture, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance.

In 2024, the committee examined 956 cases of violations against the human rights of MPs. This caseload not only represents an increase of 25 per cent since 2023 but is a tripling in numbers from 311 cases in 2014. The human rights violations of these 956 MPs include:

- Suspension or abusive loss of parliamentary mandate
- Attacks on freedom of expression
- Threats and intimidation (including of family members)
- Forced disappearances
- Assassinations disguised as suicides.⁴²

The IPU acknowledges that the problem is growing, particularly for outspoken opposition MPs, who make up most of the cases before the CHRP. However, it also appreciates that the current cases are “probably just the tip of an iceberg of MPs in danger around the world”.⁴³ The IPU also noted the geographical scope of cases indicating that although the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen account for the largest number of cases before the CHRP, “every region in the world is affected”.⁴⁴

At the assembly, the Governing Council approved several decisions regarding the human rights of parliamentarians around the world facing human rights violations including in relation to Senator Jaime Guzmán Errázuriz, an opposition member of parliament of Brazil who was assassinated in Chile in 1991 and Mr Chérubin Okende Senga, an opposition member of the Parliament of the Democratic Republic of Congo who was abducted and murdered in July 2023. The caseload also includes

⁴² IPU, Impact Report 2024, p. 8, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2025-04/impact-report-2024> (accessed 9 May 2025).

⁴³ IPU, Impact Report 2024, p. 27, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2025-04/impact-report-2024> (accessed 9 May 2025).

⁴⁴ IPU, Impact Report 2024, p. 8, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2025-04/impact-report-2024> (accessed 9 May 2025).

68 parliamentarians in Türkiye (of whom 34 are women) and 63 parliamentarians in Tunisia (of whom 14 are women and 39 are men).⁴⁵

In terms of positive developments, in January 2025, the CHRP helped to secure the release of Zimbabwean opposition MP, Mr Job Sikhala from prison. Mr Sikhala had been held for 595 days without trial in a high-security prison where he was subjected to inhumane conditions and was denied access to medical care. On 23 April 2025, former Iraqi MP Mr Ahmed Al-Alwani was released and acquitted following more than a decade in detention. Mr Al-Alwani was arrested in December 2013 and held incommunicado, tortured and sentenced to death by hanging.⁴⁶

In October 2024, the IPU and UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched a Massive Open Online Course on Freedom of Expression for Parliaments. The course was prepared by the Centre for Law and Democracy to help parliamentarians and others better understand international standards on freedom of expression to ensure they can promote these standards in their workplace and can themselves enjoy the full and extensive freedom of expression rights.⁴⁷

Liaison with other delegations

A significant 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.

During this assembly, the delegation liaised with several other delegations and held informal discussions with delegations from Ukraine, Latvia, Canada and Lithuania.

⁴⁵ Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, Decisions adopted by the Governing Council at its 215th session (Tashkent, 9 April 2025), <https://www.ipu.org/file/21643/download> (accessed 9 May 2025).

⁴⁶ 'IPU welcomes the release of former Iraqi MP Ahmed Al-Alwani', *Press release*, 1 May 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2025-05/ipu-welcomes-release-former-iraqi-mp-ahmed-al-alwani> (accessed 1 May 2025).

⁴⁷ Massive Open Online Course on Freedom of Expression For Parliaments and their Members, <https://www.ipu.org/massive-open-online-course-freedom-expression-parliaments-and-their-members> (accessed 9 May 2025).

Other functions

On 3 April, Senator O'Neill attended a lunch of the IPU Executive Committee. On 4 April, the delegation attended a dinner of the Twelve Plus Group. On 5 April, the Uzbekistan Parliament hosted the inaugural ceremony of the IPU. Following the ceremony, Senator O'Neill attended an Executive Committee dinner and reception.

On 7 April, the delegation attended a reception hosted by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and on 8 April, the delegation attended a cultural evening organised by the Parliament of Uzbekistan.

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

Acknowledgements and concluding remarks

The Australian delegation was active as ever at the 150th IPU Assembly and acknowledges the valuable support provided to it during this time.

The delegation would like to thank the Presiding Officers of the Parliament of Australia for approving the delegation to the 150th Assembly which travelled to Tashkent after the dissolution of the House of Representatives on 28 March 2025.

The delegation thanks the Uzbekistan Parliament for hosting the 150th IPU Assembly. The delegation is particularly grateful to Senator Kadirxanova Malika Akbarovna and her team for supporting the delegation during the assembly.

The delegation also gives considerable thanks to the Deputy Mayor of Tashkent, Dr Sultanova Shakhnoza Abduvaxitovna who also assisted the delegation during the assembly. Together they provided the delegation with a wonderful introduction to and insight into Uzbek culture and customs.

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

The delegation also wishes to acknowledge the work of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade staff in Canberra who provided background briefing material.

The delegation also appreciates the assistance and support of the International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) for support to the delegation.

Finally, the delegation would like to acknowledge the efforts of the delegation Secretary, Dr Jane Thomson who accompanied the delegation to support its work.

Senator Deborah O'Neill
Senator for New South Wales
Delegation Leader