

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting its participation at the 135th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**Geneva, Switzerland
October 23 to 27, 2016**

Report

OVERVIEW

A delegation from the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) attended the [135th IPU Assembly](#) and related meetings in Geneva (Switzerland) from 23 October to 27 October 2016. The Canadian delegation was comprised of the following members:

- Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P., President of the Canadian IPU Group and head of the delegation;
- Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator;
- Sven Spengemann, M.P.;
- Salma Zahid, M.P.;
- Todd Doherty, M.P.;
- Bev Shipley, M.P.; and
- Irene Mathysen, M.P.

Meetings of the IPU provide an important opportunity for Canadian parliamentary diplomacy. Multilateral work occurs through the meetings of various committees and other bodies that take place during an IPU assembly. Bilateral work occurs through the side meetings that arise during IPU assemblies.

Throughout the 135th Assembly, members of the Canadian delegation engaged in exchanges with their counterparts and participated in various debates in an attempt to further the principles of representative democracy, the rule of law, human rights and gender equality. They also addressed matters pertinent to Canadian foreign policy, including the respect of humanitarian law in conflict zones, as well as the freedom for women to participate in political processes.

THE IPU: BACKGROUND

Established in 1889, the IPU is the international organization of parliaments of sovereign states. The IPU is the focal point for global parliamentary dialogue, working for peace and cooperation as well as for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To this end, it:

- Fosters contacts, co-ordination, and the exchange of experiences among parliamentarians of all member parliaments;
- Considers questions of international interest and concern, and expresses its views on relevant issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians;

- Contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights, which are essential aspects of parliamentary democracy and development; and
- Contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions, and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.¹

At present, the IPU's activities are pursued according to its *Strategy 2012–2017: Better parliaments, stronger democracies*. However, a revised strategy *Strong democratic parliaments, serving the people* was adopted for 2017–2021 during the 135th Assembly².

At the close of the 135th Assembly, 171 national parliaments were members of the IPU and 11 regional parliamentary assemblies were associate members.

THE 135TH IPU ASSEMBLY

A. The 135th Assembly Agenda³

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the IPU on political issues. Two Statutory Assemblies are held each year, bringing together parliamentarians from around the world to study international issues and make recommendations for action.

The agenda for the 135th Assembly included the following items:

- Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the 135th Assembly;
- Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda;
- General debate on *Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders*;
- Resolution on *The freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference : Building partnerships between men and women to achieve this objective* (Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights);
- Reports of the Standing Committees on Peace and International Security, on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade, and on United Nations Affairs;
- Approval of the subject item for the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights for the 137th Assembly, and appointment of the co-Rapporteurs;

¹ See: IPU, "[Overview](#)"; and IPU, [Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#).

² IPU, [IPU Strategy 2012–2017: Better parliaments, stronger democracies](#).

³ Detailed reports and information on the 135th IPU Assembly and related Meetings are available on the IPU website. See: IPU, [135th IPU Assembly and related Meetings](#), Geneva, 23–27 October 2016; and IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016.

- Debate of an emergency item on *The war and the severe humanitarian situation in Syria, particularly in Aleppo*.⁴

Overall, delegations from 141 member parliaments participated in the activities of the 135th Assembly. Of the 1,487 delegates in attendance, 693 were members of national parliaments; they included 51 Presiding Officers and 50 Deputy Presiding Officers, as well as 228 women parliamentarians, a record in female participation at IPU Assemblies (32.9% of all parliamentarians).

B. The General Debate

At the 135th Assembly, a general debate was held on the topic of “Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders.” During the debate, which was held over three days, representatives of 105 Member Parliaments, 2 Associate Members and 5 Permanent Observers took the floor to address the theme of the General Debate.⁵ **All members of the Canadian delegation** attended at least one of the sessions.

As President of the Canadian IPU Group and head of the delegation, **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P.** delivered a speech during the General Debate. He began by reminding all IPU delegates that parliamentarians have a responsibility to prevent violent conflict. He gave a few examples of how Canada has chosen to shoulder this responsibility internationally: the development of the responsibility to protect, a renewed commitment to peacekeeping, development assistance overseas, but also a commitment to peace through diplomacy, including how Canada is seeking a seat at the UN Security Council. He then said that a commitment to human rights begins by taking action at home, such as addressing the historical treatment of the Indigenous people of Canada. Mr. Erskine-Smith continued by stating that if parliaments are to be early responders to human rights abuses, they must commit to the independence of institutions, of citizens, and of parliamentarians. First, he explained how parliaments serve those they represent: as representative institutions, parliaments promote human rights and offer a place to mediate societal differences through debate; furthermore, as institutions independent of government, parliaments can hold executive power accountable for their actions. However, Mr. Erskine-Smith noted that this is only possible when parliamentarians can work with no fear of reprisals. He stated how shocked he was that, in the past year, the IPU’s committee on the human rights of parliamentarians investigated 320 cases of alleged rights violations against parliamentarians in over 40 countries. He went on to describe other independent institutions such as the media, the courts, electoral commissions, privacy and of access to information commissions, as well as oversight bodies such as accounting chambers responsible for the scrutiny of government spending. Second, he reaffirmed that democracies and the protection of human rights, depend on citizens being independent: informed, active, and both willing and able to hold parliaments to account, with men and women empowered equally. Lastly, Mr. Erskine-Smith explained how independent parliamentarians, those truly committed to human rights, cannot condone legislation that

⁴ IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, p. 28.

⁵ Ibid, p. 7.

infringes upon such rights, and that they must call for action and redress whenever violations are witnessed. He concluded his speech by reminding all delegates that as parliamentarians, they had chosen to be trustees of the public interest and that they must take that responsibility seriously.

The Assembly adopted the outcome document of the Assembly's General Debate on 27 October 2016.⁶

C. The Emergency Item

The IPU Statutes provide that an IPU assembly may include one emergency item in its agenda.⁷ The IPU Rules further provide that: "Should several requests obtain the requisite majority, the one having received the largest number of positive votes shall be accepted."⁸ By 24 October 2016, the 135th Assembly received eight requests for the inclusion of an emergency item on its agenda. Three were withdrawn before the vote (Bangladesh, Uganda and Venezuela). The Syrian Arab Republic made a statement opposing the emergency item jointly proposed by Germany and Mexico entitled "*The war and the severe humanitarian situation in Syria, particularly in Aleppo*." **Canada** made an intervention to oppose the emergency item put forward by Russia and Syria "*Restoring peace and security in Syria: The contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union*".⁹ Following a roll-call vote¹⁰, the proposed emergency item entitled "*The war and the severe humanitarian situation in Syria, particularly in Aleppo*" was added to the 135th Assembly's agenda. The Canadian delegation voted in favour of this item.

A debate on the emergency item was held on 25 October 2016; and **Todd Doherty, M.P.** made an intervention on behalf of the Canadian delegation, rebutting statements from other delegations that the atrocities committed in Syria were inflated by the media. He reminded the audience that these atrocities included kidnapping, enslavement and the torture of girls and young women. He spoke of Canada's financial contribution to humanitarian, development and security assistance as well as the resettlement of 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada. Mr. Doherty concluded by stating that all parliaments must do more to address the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

On 27 October 2016, the Assembly adopted the resulting resolution by consensus, although the Syrian Arab Republic rejected the entire resolution and Cuba included some reservations.¹¹

D. IPU Standing Committees

⁶ IPU, [Outcome document of the General Debate on Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders](#), endorsed by the 135th IPU Assembly (Geneva, 27 October 2016).

⁷ IPU, [Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#), article 14(2).

⁸ IPU, "[Rules of the Assembly](#)," adopted in 1976 and extensively revised in October 1983, April 2003 and October 2013, Rule 11.

⁹ IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, p.6.

¹⁰ IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, pp. 36–40. The number of votes to which each IPU member parliament is entitled is calculated according to the provisions of Article 15 of the IPU [Statutes](#).

¹¹ The [full text](#) of the unanimous resolution is available.

Each IPU assembly is assisted in its work by standing committees. Each delegation is represented on standing committees by one member and one substitute member.¹² At the 129th Assembly in October 2013, the Governing Council adopted significant amendments to the rules of the standing committees: in addition to the topic of a draft resolution, a committee's work plan can now include other activities, such as hearings, reports and missions.

During the 135th Assembly, the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights debated a draft resolution.

1. Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security held sessions on 24 and 26 October 2016 in order to:¹³

- debate on the subject matter of the resolution to be adopted at the 136th Assembly on “The role of parliament in preventing outside interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States;”
- hold a panel discussion on “Promoting democratic accountability of the private security sector;” and
- hold a panel discussion on “Comprehensive disarmament.”

On 24 October 2016, after a presentation by Mr. F. Zarbiyev, Professor of International Law at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, the co-rapporteurs, Ms. S. Koutra-Koukouma (Cyprus) and Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) spoke to the topic of the next resolution on “The role of parliament in preventing outside interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States”, and opened the floor to comments.

Sven Spengemann, M.P. and **Todd Doherty, M.P.** both intervened in the discussion. **Mr. Spengemann** began by recognizing the principle of sovereign equality and the duty of non-intervention enshrined in international law. However, he stated that Canada will oppose military aggression and illegal occupation, which threaten international peace and security, by the means available to it. He announced to the IPU delegates that Canada was seeking a seat at the U.N. Security Council. **Mr. Doherty** explained how Canada's foreign policy priorities include respect for diversity and human rights, that translate into the prevention of mass atrocities, genocide and the resolution of conflict through peaceful means, by providing support for peace operations, mediation, reconstruction and early recovery efforts in the face of humanitarian crises, engaging in military intervention only as a means of last resort. He urged parliamentarians to advocate for and to work together to strengthen respect of international law.

On 26 October 2016, the Committee heard from Ms. A. M. Burdzy, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, and from Ms. H. Obregón Gieseken,

¹² IPU, [Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#), article 13; and, IPU, [“Rules of the Standing Committees.”](#)

¹³ For the report of the Standing Committee's session, see: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, pp. 43–45.

International Committee of the Red Cross, as part of a panel moderated by Mr. F. Lombardi (Switzerland) on “Promoting democratic accountability of the private security sector.” **Todd Doherty, M.P.** and **Bev Shipley, M.P.** attended this session. **Mr. Doherty** made an intervention, recalling the international legal framework, including the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers.

2. Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade held sessions on 25 and 26 October 2016 in order to:¹⁴

- discuss “Parliamentary contribution on the 2016 UN Climate Change Conference;”
- debate the subject matter of the resolution to be adopted at the 136th Assembly on "Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals], in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development;” and
- discuss “The role of parliaments in countering the activities of vulture funds.”

On 25 October 2016, the first part of the session was dedicated to the preliminary IPU draft outcome document for the Parliamentary Meeting at the United Nations Climate Change Conference that would take place on 13 November 2016 in Marrakech. The session started with an overview of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Mr. S. Huq, Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development, summarized the main provisions of the Paris Agreement, as well as the ratification mechanism and highlighted that the ratification process was quicker than expected. Mr. A. Touizi, member of the House of Councillors of Morocco and rapporteur to the Parliamentary Meeting in Marrakech, introduced his draft document to the Committee.

The debate on "Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development” was chaired by Mr. J. Fried, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the World Trade Organization. It included a panel of experts consisting of Ms. G. Fraser-Moleketi, Special Envoy on Gender of the African Development Bank; Ms. S. Iqbal, Manager of Women, Business and the Law Project, World Bank Group; and Ms. D. Tembo, Deputy Executive Director of the International Trade Centre.

Irene Mathyssen, M.P. and **Bev Shipley, M.P.** attended the first session. **Ms. Mathyssen** made an intervention stating that affordable housing and the availability of child care would be instrumental to supporting the financial inclusion of women. The co-rapporteurs Ms. G. Cuevas (Mexico) and Mr. N.K. Premachandran (India) indicated they would incorporate this point into the draft resolution.

On 26 October 2016, the Committee studied vulture funds with the expert contribution of Mr. A. Gwynne, M.P., United Kingdom, Mr. S. Crusnière, Member of the House of

¹⁴ For the report of the Standing Committee’s session, see: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, pp. 46–48.

Representatives, Belgium, and Mr. T. Stichelmans de Castro Freire, Policy and Networking Analyst, European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad). Mr. Stichelmans explained that vulture funds were private entities that acquired distressed debt on the secondary market for a lower-than-face value. Vulture funds then waited for an improvement in the financial situation of the debtor State to sue the debtor to get reimbursement of the full value. He affirmed that such funds undermined countries' capacity to invest in development and poverty alleviation.

Mr. Gwynne explained how his Private Member's Bill in the UK legislature on vulture funds evolved and why it was a first attempt, hence a precedent, to protect poor countries from being sued for vulture funds using the UK judicial system. Mr. Crusnière presented the main provisions of Belgian legislation on vulture funds, which limit the duty of countries to repay vulture funds, especially if there is a demonstrated disproportion between face value and issue price.

Irene Mathysen, M.P. attended this session.

3. Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

The Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights addressed the topic: "The freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference: Building partnerships between men and women to achieve this objective." The Committee met on 24 October 2016 and on 26 October 2016.¹⁵

The Standing Committee finalized the draft resolution prepared by the co-Rapporteurs, Ms. N. Marino (Australia) and Mr. M. Kilonzo Junior (Kenya) during a plenary session. It had 102 amendments to consider,¹⁶ including several that had been submitted by the Canadian delegation.

During the plenary debate on the proposed amendments, **Salma Zahid, M.P. and Bev Shipley, M.P.** presented and explained Canada's proposed amendments, which complemented and were intended to build on the existing draft resolution. Most Canadian amendments were incorporated into the resolution. Prior to the consideration of the amendments, **Mr. Shipley** made an intervention highlighting Canada's gender parity cabinet. He also emphasized that, in keeping with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights where it is stated that everyone has the right to education, women and girls must have equal access to education to allow them to participate in political processes.

On 26 October, the Committee adopted the resolution as amended. It also adopted the topic that will be debated at the 137th Assembly proposed by the Russian Federation, "Sharing our diversity: The 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy", with only one co-rapporteur Mr. I. Umakhanov confirmed at the end of the 135th Assembly.

a. Bureau of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

¹⁵ For the text of the resolution, see: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, pp. 30-35.

¹⁶ The [full list](#) of proposed amendments is available.

On 25 October 2016, **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P.** presented to the Bureau the topic proposed by Canada for the 137th Assembly on “Parliaments’ role in Protecting the Rights of Minorities.” The explanatory note stated that throughout the world, the actions of some political leaders and legislatures continue to undermine the rights of minorities and render their situations precarious. Several minorities are subjected to a number of human rights abuses, including hate speech, racially and ethnically motivated attacks on civilians, and the enactment of laws that disenfranchise the most vulnerable. An IPU resolution could call on parliaments to review the compliance of their legislative framework with their international human rights obligations. However, at the end of its meeting, the Bureau chose the topic put forward by the Russian Federation.

4. Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

A dedicated IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs was created in 2007 “in order to better respond to the growing partnership between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations.”¹⁷ Following changes to the IPU Statutes and Rules that were adopted at the 129th Assembly in October 2013, the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs became the fourth standing committee of the IPU.

The Standing Committee held a session on 26 October 2016 in order to discuss:¹⁸

- Funding the United Nations (UN); and
- The UN response to allegations of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers.

Both panels were moderated by Mr. A. Avsan (Sweden). For the first session on “Funding the United Nations”, the panellists were Mr. R. Lalli, Secretary of the High-Level Committee on Management, United Nations, Ms. B. Adams, Global Policy Forum, Ms. E. Nursanty (Indonesia) and Senator Graciela Ortiz (Mexico). The Committee heard that the UN funding model had become over-dependent on earmarked, voluntary funding from relatively few donor countries, as well as a growing number of non-government donors (e.g. the Gates Foundation). This pattern was observed across the entire system of over 30 entities (i.e. agencies, funds and programmes) in addition to the UN proper. Each of these entities had its own governing body, making it difficult for the UN “system” to act coherently, under a central budget authority. **Sven Spengemann, M.P.** and **Salma Zahid, M.P.** attended the Committee’s first session.

The second panel was composed of Mr. B. Klappe, Senior Military Legal Expert, Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, Dr. Shelly Whitman, Executive Director, Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, Canada, via Skype as well as Ms. A. Rashed Albasti (United Arab Emirates) and Senator Mokolo Wa Mpombo (Democratic Republic of the Congo). The Committee heard that the UN response included such steps as: creating an interdepartmental steering group to oversee peacekeeping operations; putting in place a

¹⁷ IPU Cooperation with the United Nations, “[IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs](#).”

¹⁸ For the report of the Standing Committee’s session, see: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, pp. 49–51.

clear, system-wide protocol for victims assistance (on the premise that victim protection must come first); establishing clear accountability lines to identify who is responsible for what action throughout the chain of command; developing a common glossary to clarify the various meanings of sexual abuse and exploitation; and establishing a trust fund to support victims. **Senator Ataullahjan**, and **Irene Mathyssen, M.P.** attended the Committee's second session. **Senator Ataullahjan** made an intervention, asking how many victims had received compensation from the fund that exists for this purpose.

PARTICIPATION BY CANADIAN DELEGATES IN RELATED MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

A. IPU Governing Institutions

1. Governing Council¹⁹

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the IPU.²⁰ Moreover, several committees fall under the Governing Council's responsibility and report to it on their work.²¹ The Council is composed of three representatives from each IPU member parliament, provided that its representation includes both men and women parliamentarians.²²

Meetings of the 199th Session of the Governing Council were held on 24 and 27 October 2016. **All Canadian delegates** attended at least one of these meetings.

The Governing Council had a number of items on its agenda, including the following:²³

- questions relating to IPU membership;
- financial situation of the IPU;
- programme and budget for 2017;
- IPU cooperation with the UN system;
- IPU Strategy for 2017–2021;
- reports on recent IPU specialized meetings;

¹⁹ This section reflects highlights of the [199th Session](#) of the IPU Governing Council. For further details, see also: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, pp. 11–13, 16–18, and 52–111.

²⁰ The functions of the Governing Council are outlined in Article 21 of the IPU [Statutes](#).

²¹ These committees include: the Forum of Women Parliamentarians; the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians; the Committee on Middle East Questions; the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus; the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law; the Gender Partnership Group of the Executive Committee; the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health; and, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU.

²² IPU, "[Rules of the Governing Council](#)," adopted in 1971 and extensively revised in October 1983 and April 2003.

²³ IPU, "[Convocation: 199th Session of the Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva \(Switzerland\) 24 and 27 October 2016](#)," CL/199/C.1, 15 June 2016.

- action by the IPU to strengthen democracy and parliamentary institutions;
- activities of committees and other bodies;²⁴
- future inter-parliamentary meetings; and
- elections to the Executive Committee.

The Council approved the request for affiliation from the Parliament of Swaziland.

The Council noted that the income and expenditure of the IPU were close to target for the first half of the year and were projected to remain within overall budget until the end of the year.

The Governing Council approved [the 2017 budget](#) of CHF 15,927,300. Canada's contribution for 2017, established according to a formula using the UN scale of assessment, is 3.11% of the budget or 317 7000 CHF.²⁵

Members took note that the new cooperation agreement between the IPU and the United Nations, that had been under negotiation for some time, was signed in July 2016 between the Secretaries General of the two organizations. The new pact gave recognition to the IPU as the world organization of parliaments and placed the strategic partnership between the IPU and the United Nations on a stronger footing. In July 2016, the UN General Assembly also adopted a consensus resolution entitled [Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#).

The Governing Council adopted the [revised IPU Strategy for 2017–2021](#), which will serve as the Organization's roadmap for the next five years. Entitled *Strong democratic parliaments serving the people*, the document highlights the need for democracy to deliver better development and peace outcomes for people everywhere. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is expected to provide an appropriate framework for meeting the objectives contained in the Strategy.

At its session on 27 October, the Council heard the findings of the on-site mission to St. Petersburg with a view to that city's hosting of the 137th Assembly. Final approval of that city as the venue for the 137th IPU Assembly was contingent on the report, whose findings were positive. The delegation of Ukraine requested a roll-call vote to confirm the Council's decision about the venue for the 137th IPU Assembly. The [results of the vote](#) were: 138 affirmative votes, 19 negatives votes and 5 abstentions. **Canada** voted against this venue. The Governing Council reconfirmed its decision to hold the 137th IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg (Russian Federation) from 14 to 18 October 2017.

The Council also relayed that the Executive Committee held extensive discussion on future meetings. It took note of the special security arrangements that would be put in place and security guarantees given by the Bangladeshi authorities for the 136th Assembly in light of the terrorist attack that had taken place in Dhaka in July 2016.

²⁴ Further information is contained on pages 16–18 of the following document: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016.

²⁵ IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, pp.60-61.

B. The Forum of Women Parliamentarians

In accordance with the IPU Statutes, a meeting of Women Parliamentarians is held during the assemblies; it reports on its work to the Governing Council. In general, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians aims to:

- encourage contact among women parliamentarians;
- foster democracy by promoting partnership between men and women in all fields;
- promote the participation of women parliamentarians in the work of the IPU and the equitable representation of women at all institutional levels within the IPU; and
- pre-study certain issues on the agendas of IPU assemblies and/or the Governing Council.²⁶

The 24th Forum of Women Parliamentarians took place on 23 October 2016. Agenda items included the following:²⁷

- a briefing on the work done at the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians (37th and 38th sessions);
- a briefing on the work and recommendations of the Gender Partnership Group;
- a presentation of the new IPU study on *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*;
- consideration, from a gender perspective, of the draft resolution entitled “*The freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference : Building partnerships between men and women to achieve this objectives*” on the agenda of the 135th Assembly; and
- a panel discussion on securing the rights and future of women and girls during war and conflict.

There were 124 delegates from 70 different countries.

On 23 October 2016, **Senator Atullahjan** reported on the work of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians in Lusaka, Zambia, and on the Bureau’s work that morning in Geneva. The report from the Gender Partnership group indicated that 17 delegations did not comply with IPU gender participation guidelines at the 135th Assembly: 15 delegations were composed of men only, while 2 delegations were composed of women only. The new study on *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*, was presented: it was based on 80 interviews from women parliamentarians worldwide. **Senator Atullahjan** participated in this study, and was

²⁶ IPU, [Rules of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians](#).

²⁷ For the report of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, see: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, p. 15.

asked by the IPU Secretariat if she would answer media questions following the meeting.²⁸

Salma Zahid M.P. and **Irene Mathysen M.P.** attended and participated in the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, where the participants in attendance were split into two working groups to provide recommendations for the draft resolution on the 135th Assembly's agenda. **Senator Ataullahjan** chaired the working group on "Successful strategies to engage men on gender equality" in which **Ms. Mathysen** participated. **Ms. Zahid** participated in the working group on "Stopping political violence against women".

At the afternoon session, **Salma Zahid M.P.** made an intervention on "Securing the rights and future of women and girls during war and conflict". Her remarks focussed on recent events such as the crisis in Syria and the migration of refugees towards Europe. She quoted findings from a [joint assessment](#) conducted by the United Nations Refugee Agency, the United Nations Population Fund and the Women's Refugee Commission in January 2016: despite the high risk of sexual and gender-based violence faced by these women, no systems are currently in place to respond to this threat in "any meaningful way" and the perception persists that sexual and gender-based violence is not an important factor in the crisis. She stated that the responsibility to respond to this situation, and to others like it, falls not on any one country or region, simply because of where these women and girls are located, but it is a collective responsibility to ensure that the rights of these women are respected.

1. The Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

The Bureau of Women Parliamentarians assists the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians by:

- preparing the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and facilitating its normal working in conformity with the Statutes and Rules of the IPU;
- ensuring the continuity of work and the coordination of the initiatives of women parliamentarians; and
- ensuring coordination between the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and the other bodies of the IPU.²⁹

It is composed of 12 elected members representing the geopolitical groups and women members of the Executive Committee, who are *ex officio* members. **Senator Ataullahjan** was elected titular member of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians (formerly known as the Coordinating Committee) for the Twelve Plus Group at the 134th Assembly. She participated in the Bureau's 38th Session which included meetings on 23 October and 27 October 2016. **Senator Ataullahjan** accepted to be the Bureau's Rapporteur again in Dhaka during the 136th Assembly, and will also participate as a

²⁸ Senator Ataullahjan was quoted in [bbc.com](#), Imagen Foulkes, [Sexual harassment of female MPs widespread, report says](#), 26 October 2016.

²⁹ IPU, [Rules of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians](#).

rapporteur in the working groups studying the resolution on “Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development.”

C. The Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU

The Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU was created in March 2014 as a permanent body dedicated to enhancing the quantitative and qualitative participation of youth in parliaments and in the IPU. Its objectives are to:

- Broaden diversity and inclusiveness by increasing the presence of young parliamentarians at IPU Assemblies and meetings;
- Strengthen the added value of youth in the IPU by incorporating a youth perspective in the IPU’s agenda and work and building bridges between the IPU and youth organizations;
- Achieve better parliaments and stronger democracies by promoting youth participation in parliaments and reaching out to young people involved in politics; and
- Ensure better follow-up and implementation of decisions and recommendations contained in the IPU resolution on "Youth participation in the democratic process", adopted by the 122nd Assembly in Bangkok.

The Forum met on 24 October 2016.³⁰ **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P.** attended this session, and was elected to the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, representing the Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group.

1. Meeting with the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

On 25 October 2016, **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P.** met with the IPU Secretary General Mr. Martin Chungong.

D. Meetings of the Geopolitical Groups

Article 27 of the IPU Statutes permits IPU members to form geopolitical groups; there are six such groups formally recognized by the IPU. The groups play an important role in the functioning and activities of the IPU. Each group determines its own working methods, and informs the IPU Secretariat of its composition, officers and rules of procedure.

Canada belongs to two geopolitical groups:³¹

³⁰ For the report of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, see: IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, p. 18.

³¹ IPU, [“Geopolitical groups.”](#)

- the 47-member Twelve Plus Group, which includes nations from Europe, as well as Australia, New Zealand and Israel; and
- the 31-member Asia-Pacific Group.

While Canada participates in the activities of both groups, it submits candidatures for vacant positions within the IPU through the Twelve Plus Group.

1. Asia-Pacific Group

A meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group was held on 23 October 2016. **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P., Sven Spengemann, M.P., Todd Doherty, M.P., and Bev Shipley, M.P.** attended the meeting.

Agenda items included the following:

- presentation by the IPU President on the possible creation of a secretariat for the Group;
- briefing by IPU Executive Committee members;
- report from the ASEAN+3 Group;
- review of vacancies to be filled during the 135th Assembly; and
- discussion of emergency item to be added to the Assembly's agenda.

2. Twelve Plus Group

Meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were held on 23, 25, and 27 October 2016. **All Canadian delegates** participated in these meetings.

Agenda items included the following:

- report on the Group's Steering Committee meeting, held in Brussels on 3 October 2016;
- report from the Group's representatives on the work of the IPU Executive Committee, including the IPU's new strategy for 2017-2021, venue for the 137th Assembly;
- elections to fill vacancies;
- debate of the emergency item;
- meetings of the IPU standing committees; and
- the Presidency of the Twelve Plus.

Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P. was elected to represent the Twelve Plus at the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, for the remainder of the term of his predecessor, six months. However, the group decided not to hold other elections in Dhaka, so that his term will be renewed at the 136th Assembly for another two years.

The delegation of Ukraine brought up the topic of the 137th Assembly being held in Russia, asking for a boycott by the Twelve Plus. **Todd Doherty, M.P.** made an intervention, pointing out that Canada felt very strongly about the illegal annexation of Crimea and the events in Ukraine. Overall, the Twelve Plus group sided with the approach proposed by the United Kingdom for continued dialogue.

Mr. Duarte Pacheco from Portugal was elected as the next President of the Twelve Plus Group, for a two-year term that started at the end of the 135th Assembly.

E. Other Events

On 25 October 2016 the Twelve Plus group hosted a side event on "*e-Parliament: Online voting in a parliamentary context*". **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P.** attended this session.

On 26 October 2016, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians organized a Parity Debate on the topic of "*Harassment and violence against parliamentarians: Issues and solutions*".³²

Sven Spengemann, M.P. participated as a panelist, alongside fellow parliamentarians Ms. N. Luo (Zambia), and Ms. E. Mendoza Fernández (Plurinational State of Bolivia). Mr. M. Kilonzo Junior (Kenya) acted as moderator. The moderator remarked on the attendance of both men and women at the session. These participants shared some of their experiences of intimidation and violence in the exercise of their functions, mainly in parliaments and political meetings, and on social media. They stressed that threats of murder, rape or kidnapping, including on social media, must be taken seriously and those responsible prosecuted. **Mr. Spengemann** indicated that Canada's House of Commons has adopted a code of conduct to deal with harassment between MPs, to create a culture in which ongoing deterrents to reporting are diminished and complainants feel as safe as possible in coming forward with a complaint. **Salma Zahid, M.P.** also attended this session.

On 27 October 2016 the IPU Secretariat organized a Joint IPU-ASGP³³ session Panel discussion: *How parliaments change: Developing recommendations for strengthening parliamentary oversight* to feed in to the second Global Parliamentary Report. **Senator Ataullahjan** was asked to speak about changes she had experienced, and she spoke of various reforms in the Senate, a body enshrined in the Constitution since 1867. These reforms are necessary she stated, as Canadians need to see that Senators really work for them.³⁴

³² IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, p. 22.

³³ [ASGP](#) stands for the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments.

³⁴ IPU, [Results of the 135th Assembly and related meetings](#), 2016, p 23; also, the [Second Global Parliamentary Report](#).

F. Bilateral Meetings

Members of the Canadian delegation held bilateral meetings with other delegations, including the following:

- Bangladesh,
- Israel;
- Republic of Korea;
- Pakistan, and
- Portugal.

These exchanges provide an important opportunity for the Canadian IPU Group to engage in parliamentary diplomacy, to increase its understanding of other countries and regions, to discuss key bilateral issues and matters pertinent to the international agenda, and to work towards shared multilateral goals, including in the context of the work of the IPU.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P.

President

Canadian Group of the IPU

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	135 th Assembly of the IPU and Related Meetings
DESTINATION	Geneva, Switzerland
DATES	October 23 to 27, 2016
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Salma Ataullahjan, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, M.P. Sven Spengemann, M.P. Salma Zahid, M.P. Todd Doherty, M.P. Bev Shipley, M.P. Irene Mathyssen, M.P.
STAFF	Line Gravel, Association Secretary Julie Béchard, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 39,938.26
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 21,080.62
HOSPITALITY	\$ 413.55
PER DIEMS	\$ 13,154.06
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 240.07
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 74,826.56