

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary
Union (IPIU)**

**206th Session of the Governing Council
Extraordinary Virtual Session**

November 1-3, 2020

Overview

A delegation from the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) participated in the [206th Session of the Governing Council](#), which took place as an Extraordinary Virtual Session from 1–3 November 2020. The Canadian delegation comprised:

- the Honourable David McGuinty, P.C., M.P., President of the Canadian Group of the IPU and Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee for the Twelve Plus Group (official delegate);
- the Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator, Vice-President of the Canadian Group of the IPU, Chair of the IPU Committee on Middle East Questions, and Bureau member of the IPU's Forum of Women Parliamentarians (observer);
- the Honourable Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator, Member of the Executive of the Canadian Group of the IPU (official delegate);
- Ms. Marilène Gill, M.P., Member of the Executive of the Canadian Group of the IPU (observer); and
- Ms. Stephanie Kusie, M.P. (official delegate).

The delegation was assisted by Ms. Céline Ethier, the Executive Secretary of the Canadian Group of the IPU, as well as Mr. Scott McTaggart and Ms. Natalie Mychajlyszyn, Advisors to the Canadian Group of the IPU, Library of Parliament.

Background

Established in 1889, the IPU is the world organization of parliaments of sovereign states. Headquartered in Geneva, its membership includes 179 national parliaments, as well as 13 regional parliamentary assemblies as associate

members.¹ The Canadian Group of the IPU formally joined the IPU in 1912, with the modern-day Canadian Group being established in 1960.

The IPU is the focal point for global parliamentary dialogue, working for peace and co-operation as well as for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To this end, it:

- fosters contact, co-ordination, and dialogue 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 recognised as essential aspects of parliamentary democracy and development; and
- contributes to improving knowledge and understanding of parliaments, and to strengthening and developing their legislative capacity.²

The rules governing the IPU are set out in its Statutes and Rules, which were adopted in 1976 and most recently revised in 2019.³

The IPU is made up of four bodies: the Governing Council, the Executive Committee, the Secretariat and the Assembly.

- The Governing Council is the primary oversight body of the IPU.⁴ It is composed of three representatives from each IPU member parliament, provided that the delegation includes both men and women parliamentarians.⁵ Several subsidiary bodies of the IPU report to the Governing Council, including the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the

¹ For a complete list of member parliaments, see Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Members](#).

² See: IPU, "[About us](#)"; and IPU, [Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#).

³ The [Statutes and Rules of the IPU](#) were extensively revised in October 1983, April 2003, October 2013, March 2016, April 2017, March and October 2018, and October 2019.

⁴ The functions of the Governing Council are outlined in Article 21 of the IPU [Statutes](#)

⁵ IPU, "[Rules of the Governing Council](#)."

Committee on Middle East Questions and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.⁶ Decisions of the Governing Council are most often taken by consensus.

- **The IPU's Executive Committee advises the Governing Council on various matters, including the IPU's annual work program and budget. The Executive Committee also manages the IPU's Secretariat and its implementation of decisions taken by IPU bodies.⁷**
 - **The IPU Secretariat comprises the IPU's staff working under the direction of the Secretary General, who is independent from the IPU's member parliaments. The Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the IPU and implementing the IPU's strategies. The current strategy, entitled [Strategy 2017–2021: Strong democratic parliaments serving the people](#), was adopted by the IPU's member parliaments in October 2016.**
 - **The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the IPU on political issues. Typically, two statutory assemblies are held each year, bringing together parliamentarians from around the world to study international issues and make recommendations for action.**
- IPU member parliaments belong to one or more of the six [geopolitical groups](#) that operate within the IPU: the African Group, the Arab Group, the Asia-Pacific Group, the Eurasia Group, the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Twelve Plus Group. These groups play an important role in the functioning and activities of the IPU, notably by coordinating the actions of their members and by fostering**

⁶ Other bodies include: the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus; the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law; the Advisory Group on Health; the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism; and, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU.

⁷ IPU, "[Rules of the Executive Committee](#)."

consensus, where possible, on a common approach to matters on the Assembly agenda.

The Canadian Group of the IPU belongs to two geopolitical groups: the Twelve-Plus Group⁸ (since 1975) and the Asia-Pacific Group (since 1998). Pursuant to the IPU Statutes, members that belong to more than one geopolitical group must choose which one group they will represent for the purposes of submitting candidatures for positions within the IPU. Canadian delegates represent the Twelve Plus Group when they are elected to positions within the IPU.

Over the years, Canadian parliamentarians have held many leadership roles at the IPU. Currently, the Honourable David McGuinty, P.C., MP serves on the Executive Committee as the Vice-President representing the Twelve Plus Group; his term ends in October 2021. The Honourable Senator Salma Atallahjan is President of the Committee on Middle East Questions; her term ends in April 2021. She is also a member of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians representing the Twelve Plus Group; her term was due to end April 2020. Mr. Sven Spengemann, MP is a member of the Bureau of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights; his term ends April 2021.

The 206th Session of the Governing Council

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions on international travel, the Executive Committee decided to defer the planned 142nd Assembly and instead

⁸ The Twelve-Plus Group was formed in 1974, initially as the Nine Plus Group, by IPU member parliaments from the then-European Community. The word “Plus” indicates the openness of the group to other like-minded nations. Today, the Twelve Plus Group has 47 member parliaments, including those in most European countries, as well as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Turkey, and Ukraine.

The membership of the Asia-Pacific Group is open to all national parliaments from the Asia-Pacific region represented at IPU assemblies and related meetings. The Asia-Pacific Group has 36 members.

hold the 206th Session of the Governing Council in an Extraordinary Session that was conducted virtually and with a reduced agenda.

The agenda focused primarily on the election of the President for the 2020–2023 term, the adoption of the IPU’s 2021 budget, decisions of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, and future meetings of the IPU. Special Rules of Procedure were adopted by the Governing Council to govern the virtual session and the election of the IPU president. Four candidates campaigned for the IPU presidency representing three geopolitical groups: Senator Ataullahjan (Canada, the Twelve Plus Group); Mr. Duarte Pacheco (Portugal, the Twelve Plus Group); Mr. Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani (Pakistan, the Asia-Pacific Group); Mr. Akmal Saidov (Uzbekistan, the Twelve Plus Group). Following a single round of remote voting, Mr. Pacheco was elected as the new IPU President with 56 per cent of the vote. Over 450 Council members from 145 national parliaments participated in the session of the Governing Council, of whom 40% were women and 25% young parliamentarians.⁹ The Session of the Governing Council was preceded by the 283rd and 284th Sessions of the Executive Committee (held virtually), as well as virtual meetings of the Twelve-Plus Group and the Asia-Pacific Group.

Highlights of Canadian activities:

A. 283rd and 284th Sessions of the Executive Committee

As the Vice-President representing the Twelve Plus Group on the IPU’s Executive Committee, Mr. McGuinty participated in the four virtual meetings (11, 18 and 26 June 2020 and 9 July

⁹ Documents relevant to the Governing Council’s agenda are accessible at the [session’s website](#), where a complete record of the session is also available. See: *206th session of the Governing Council, Extraordinary Virtual Session, 1–3 November 2020: Results of the proceedings.*

2020) as part of the Executive Committee's 283rd session and two virtual meetings (31 August 2020 and 30 October 2020) as part of its 284th session. These half-day meetings entailed lengthy discussions on the preparation for the 206th Governing Council, including the development of the Special Rules of Procedure that were adopted by the Governing Council to govern the virtual session and the election of the President. The Executive Committee also considered and made recommendations to the Governing Council regarding the IPU's budget for 2021, as well as planned future meetings of the IPU, among other matters.

B. Meetings of the Twelve-Plus Group

Delegates of the Canadian Group of the IPU participated in several virtual meetings of the Twelve-Plus Group to discuss agenda items for the 206th Governing Council and to coordinate actions. These meetings took place on 28 September 2020 (Steering Committee), 6 October 2020, 19 October 2020, and 26 October 2020. Canadian delegates to these meetings were as follows:

- the Honourable David McGuinty, P.C., M.P., (voting delegate);
 - the Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator;
 - the Honourable Rob Black, Senator;
- the Honourable Kim Pate, Senator (voting delegate);
- the Honourable Raymonde Saint-Germain, Senator (voting delegate);
 - the Honourable Steven Blaney, P.C., M.P.;
- the Honourable Michelle Rempel Garner, P.C., M.P.
 - Ms. Marilène Gill, M.P.;
 - Ms. Iqra Khalid, M.P.;
 - Ms. Stephanie Kusie, M.P.;

- Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen, M.P.; and,
- Mr. Sven Spengemann, M.P.

Members of the Twelve-Plus Group also elected Ms. Arda Gerkens (the Netherlands) as its new Chair; the election was carried out according to a remote voting procedure.

Senator Ataullahjan addressed the Twelve-Plus Group as a candidate for the position of President of the IPU at one of the group's virtual meetings. Among other points, she outlined her vision for the IPU, emphasizing the important role the organization plays in representing vulnerable groups around the world. Her platform highlighted such priorities as gender equality and human rights, climate action, parliamentary diplomacy and education.

Senator Saint-Germain and Ms. Rempel Garner participated in the Twelve Plus Group's virtual discussions about the elections for the IPU President. They noted the value of an election featuring four candidates, two of which were from the Twelve Plus Group and only one – Senator Ataullahjan – a woman.

C. Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group

Senator Ataullahjan participated in a virtual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group to discuss agenda items for the 206th Governing Council. She also addressed the group as a candidate for the position of President of the IPU. In outlining her vision, she drew particular links between the region's priorities and elements of her platform, notably gender equality and human rights, climate action, parliamentary diplomacy and education.

D. Election of the President of the IPU

Senator Ataullahjan was one of four candidates standing for the position of President of the IPU. She participated in a virtual hearing of the candidates with the broader IPU

membership that was held on 21 October 2020. During this hearing, she presented her platform and vision for the IPU, emphasizing gender equality and human rights, climate action, parliamentary diplomacy and education. The Canadian delegates to the Governing Council also attended this virtual hearing: Mr. McGuinty, Senator Ravalia, Ms. Gill and Ms. Kusie. As well, Senator Ataullahjan addressed the Governing Council membership as a candidate during its virtual Extraordinary Session, again presenting her priorities for the IPU. Following the announcement of Mr. Pacheco as the newly elected IPU President at the virtual session, Mr. McGuinty offered congratulations to him on behalf of the Canadian delegation, stressing the importance of the IPU in strengthening multilateralism and interdependence in a post-COVID-19 world.

Respectfully submitted,

**The Hon. David McGuinty, P.C., M.P.
President,
Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

TRAVEL COSTS

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
ACTIVITY	206th Session of the Governing Council Extraordinary Virtual Session
DESTINATION	N/A
DATES	November 1-3, 2020
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Salma Ataullahjan, Senator Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. David McGuinty, P.C., M.P. Ms. Marilène Gill, M.P. Ms. Stephanie Kusie, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Céline Ethier, Association Secretary Mr. Scott McTaggart, Advisor Ms. Natalie Mychajlyszyn, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	N/A
ACCOMMODATION	N/A
HOSPITALITY	N/A
PER DIEMS	N/A
OFFICIAL GIFTS	N/A
MISCELLANEOUS	N/A
TOTAL	N/A