

Canadian Group  
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien  
Union interparlementaire

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# **Report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

## **148th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings**

### **Geneva, Switzerland**

### **From March 23 to 27, 2024**

## Report

A delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (UIPU) attended the [148th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings](#) in Geneva, Switzerland, from 23 to 27 March 2024. The Canadian delegation comprised the following members:

- The Honourable David McGuinty, P.C., M.P., President of the Canadian Group and Head of Delegation;
- Ms. Andréanne Larouche, M.P., Second Vice-President of the Canadian Group;
- The Honourable Michelle Rempel Garner, P.C., M.P.;
- The Honourable Robert Black, Senator;
- The Honourable Raymonde Saint-Germain, Senator;
- Ms. Pam Damoff, M.P.;
- Mr. Matthew Green, M.P.; and
- Mr. Larry Maguire, M.P.

The delegation was assisted by the association secretary, Ms. Catherine Cuerrier, as well as its advisors from the Library of Parliament, Ms. Natalie Mychajlyszyn and Mr. Matthew Pringle.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assemblies are important fora for Canadian parliamentary diplomacy. Multilateral engagement occurs through the meetings of various committees and other IPU bodies, while bilateral engagement occurs through meetings that are held on the margins of the Assembly.

The Canadian delegation joined 716 parliamentarians from 144 IPU member parliaments at the 148th Assembly. It participated in various activities during the Assembly, including the General Debate on the overall theme, “Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding.” In her role as co-rapporteur, **Ms. Rempel Garner** introduced the Assembly’s next resolution entitled “The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law” under consideration at the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. In addition, she was involved in the organization of a workshop on the same theme. Canadian delegates also contributed to the Assembly’s work on draft resolutions on autonomous weapon systems proposed by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, and on partnerships for climate action proposed by the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development.

Moreover, Canadian delegates actively contributed to discussions concerning a proposed emergency resolution titled “Call for urgent action regarding the conflict in the Middle East.” They also participated in meetings of various IPU subsidiary bodies focusing on women parliamentarians, young parliamentarians, peace and security, democracy and human rights, sustainable development, and United Nations (UN) affairs.

Among other activities, Canadian delegates attended panels on a diversity of topics such as common security and the rule of law, strengthening climate legislation, interfaith dialogue, human security, and the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. They also held bilateral meetings with delegations from different countries as well as with representatives of various international organizations.

## THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Established in 1889, the IPU is the international organization of national parliaments of sovereign states. The [IPU](#) is the focal point for global parliamentary dialogue, working for peace and co-operation as well as for the 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.<sup>1</sup>

At present, the IPU's activities are pursued in line with its [Strategy 2022–2026](#), which was adopted in November 2021 at the 143rd Assembly in Madrid, Spain.

At the close of the 148th Assembly, 180 national parliaments were members of the IPU. The organization also has 15 associate members, including the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

## THE 148th ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION<sup>3</sup>

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

Delegations from 144 member parliaments and seven associate members took part in the 148th Assembly, comprising 716 parliamentarians, including 51 Presiding Officers and 48 Deputy Presiding Officers. Of this number, 252 were women (35.9% of participating parliamentarians) and 194 were under the age of 45 (27.6% of participating parliamentarians).

### A. AGENDA AND OUTCOMES

The agenda for the 148th Assembly included various items and its outcomes included:

- The adoption of the Geneva Declaration on the overall theme of the General Debate, “Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding;”

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<sup>1</sup> See: IPU, “[About us](#)”; and IPU, [Statutes and Rules of the IPU](#).

<sup>2</sup> IPU, [Members](#).

<sup>3</sup> Detailed reports and information on the 148th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings are available on the IPU website. See IPU, “[Outcomes](#),” 148th IPU Assembly.

- The adoption of a resolution entitled “Addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence,” submitted by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security;
- The adoption of the resolution, “Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity,” submitted by the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development;
- The adoption by the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs of a motion titled, “Reform of the United Nations Security Council;” and
- A Special Accountability Segment.

## 1. GENERAL DEBATE

**Mr. McGuinty** was among the 184 parliamentarians from 129 member parliaments to deliberate the overall theme of the General Debate of the Assembly, “Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding.”

During the General Debate, **Mr. McGuinty** informed attendees that the Assembly’s focus on this particular topic was an urgent reminder of the challenges facing parliamentary representatives in relation to resolving conflicts. He underlined that, as governments cannot address conflict or promote security on their own, parliamentary diplomacy has much to contribute in this regard. Mr. McGuinty also observed that parliamentary diplomacy is predicated on our common humanity and parliamentary representatives have a tremendous responsibility to safeguard humanity’s future in the face of unprecedented challenges.

In response to the frequent criticism that IPU gatherings are expensive “talk shops” or “junkets,” Mr. McGuinty emphasized that the return in investment in parliamentary diplomacy is sizeable compared with the cost of other expenditures, such as the cost of expensive weapon systems. He concluded by stating that parliamentarians need to continue to keep talking and seize all opportunities to meet their responsibilities to end conflict and enhance security.

The General Debate resulted in the endorsement by the 148th Assembly of the Geneva Declaration – “Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding.” The Geneva Declaration reaffirms the commitment of parliamentarians from around the world to parliamentary diplomacy in order to address growing challenges to peace and international security. Among other things, the Declaration:

- welcomes the work of the IPU to help foster political dialogue conducive to peacebuilding and the peaceful resolution of conflict;
- acknowledges that there is a close link between peace and development;
- underscores that vulnerable, marginalized and underrepresented members of society are disproportionately impacted by conflict, which further exacerbates pre-existing inequalities, such as unequal access to socio-economic and political rights;
- reaffirms the commitment to fostering the involvement of women and youth in politics and leadership roles, including in the military and security sectors;

- commits IPU members to the effective implementation of the women as well as youth, peace and security agendas of the UN Security Council through the inclusion of women and young people; and
- reconfirms the IPU's commitment to inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation, emphasizing the IPU's unique role as the parliamentary counterpart to the UN.

## 2. EMERGENCY ITEM

According to the IPU Statutes, one emergency item, or resolution, that pertains to “a recent major situation of international concern on which urgent action by the international community is required” may be included on the Assembly's agenda.<sup>4</sup>

At the 148th Assembly, delegations were ultimately asked to vote on the following emergency item proposals:

- “Call for urgent action regarding the conflict in the Middle East,” submitted by the delegations of Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group (see below for discussion of IPU groups);
- “Raising awareness of the International Court of Justice provisional measures for Israel in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, and of the need for urgent action on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza,” submitted by the delegation of South Africa on behalf of the African Group and the Arab Group; and
- “Free, fair and transparent elections without prohibitions: Towards and orderly and peaceful democratic Transition in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” submitted by the delegation of Argentina on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Canada** supported the inclusion of the emergency item proposed by the Twelve Plus Group. During the debates, **Ms. Rempel-Garner** addressed the Assembly to speak against a draft emergency proposal advanced by South Africa. She remarked that the proposed item did not overtly call for an immediate ceasefire to protect civilians on both sides of the conflict, which, she argued, was an essential demand to be included in any draft resolution. She urged other IPU delegations to support the draft text proposed by Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Despite efforts to combine the two proposals on the Middle East, efforts which involved **Mr. McGuinty** and **Ms. Rempel Garner**, a joint proposal did not materialize. Canada cast

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<sup>4</sup> IPU, [Statutes and Rules of the IPU](#). Proposed emergency items together with explanatory memoranda are circulated by the IPU Secretariat in advance of the Assembly if available, or at the time of the Assembly. They are also typically discussed within the geopolitical groups and among parliamentarians more generally to coordinate support. The Assembly votes to select an emergency item from among those proposed, with the one garnering two-thirds of the favourable votes cast as being selected. Should several requests obtain the requisite majority, the one having received the largest number of positive votes shall be accepted. Canada has 15 votes and may split its votes to allocate any number of ways for and against, or to abstain, so as to express the diverse views of its members on the proposed emergency items.

its 15 votes in favour of the proposal on the Middle East submitted on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group and voted against the South African proposal. It abstained from voting on the third proposal under consideration submitted by some members of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean on the situation in Venezuela.

Following the voting results, none of the proposed emergency items received the requisite two-third majority of the votes cast, meaning that no emergency item was added to the agenda for the 148th Assembly. The IPU President, Tulia Ackson, informed the Assembly that, in the absence of an emergency item resolution, she and the IPU Secretary General intended to issue a '[Leadership Statement](#)' on the situation in Gaza, which was subsequently released on 27 March 2024.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. STANDING COMMITTEES

#### a. STANDING COMMITTEE ON PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security considered its draft resolution, "Addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence." The committee reviewed 200 amendments tabled by 22 Member Parliaments as well as the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.

**Senator Saint-Germain** presented the 26 amendments proposed by the Canadian delegation and invited fellow delegates to support their adoption. These amendments in part were designed to bring the draft resolution more in line with the resolution on the same topic adopted recently by the United Nations General Assembly. They also aimed to strike a more balanced approach that does not prejudice the ongoing international negotiations to study and define autonomous weapon systems.

**Senator Black, Senator Saint-Germain, Ms. Larouche and Mr. Maguire** attended the Committee's sessions on behalf of the Canadian delegation. The amended resolution was adopted by consensus by the committee and later by the Assembly. It urges parliaments to develop national legislation to establish regulatory frameworks governing the development of autonomous weapon systems. It also calls for "meaningful human control" over weapon systems – such as drones – and for consideration of the ethical, legal and security implications of systems that function without human control and therefore potentially outside the rules of war and international humanitarian law.

Although some of Canada's proposed amendments were adopted, the final text raised concerns for the delegation about the extent to which certain paragraphs were overly prescriptive for national governments. Accordingly, **Canada** abstained from the Committee's vote on the final text and subsequently expressed reservations to it. Delegations from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France, Korea, Cuba, and Türkiye also submitted reservations to certain paragraphs. India, Iran, Russia, China and Lithuania expressed their opposition to the entire text of the resolution.

In terms of other business, the Committee endorsed "The role of parliaments in advancing a two-State solution in Palestine" as the subject item for its next resolution. Due to the

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<sup>5</sup> IPU, [IPU Leadership Statement on the situation in Gaza](#), issued at the 148th IPU Assembly (Geneva, 27 March 2024).

sensitivity of the subject, six co-rapporteurs representing all of the geopolitical groups will be confirmed at a later date. The topic will be debated at the 149th IPU Assembly in October 2024, following which the co-rapporteurs will circulate a draft text to member parliaments for consideration at the 150th IPU Assembly in March 2025.

#### b. STANDING COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development considered its resolution on the topic, “Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity”. In total, 27 IPU member delegations submitted 293 written amendments on the draft resolution. For its part, the Canadian delegation submitted 13 proposed amendments for consideration by the committee. These amendments in part sought to widen the scope of the role played by parliaments in relation to climate matters as well as to better represent the impacts of climate change on women and girls. They also sought to clarify the meaning in practice of a “just transition” for workers in the energy sector.

During the subsequent deliberations, **Ms. Damoff** intervened on multiple occasions about proposed amendments to the draft resolution. The Standing Committee adopted the majority of the Canadian delegation’s proposed amendments. The amended resolution was adopted by consensus by the committee and later by the Assembly. It highlights the importance of addressing environmental challenges through united climate action and partnerships to safeguard the planet for present and future generations. The resolution calls for strengthened international cooperation to implement the Paris Agreement on climate and stresses the need for added support for developing countries. The delegations from India and Iran expressed their opposition to the entire text, whereas those of China and Türkiye submitted reservations on certain paragraphs.

In terms of other business, the committee endorsed “Parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-lasting impact of conflicts, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development” as the subject item for its next resolution with Bahrain, Namibia and Poland as co-rapporteurs. The topic will be debated at the 149th IPU Assembly in October 2024, following which the co-rapporteurs will circulate a draft text to member parliaments for consideration at the 150th IPU Assembly in March 2025.

#### c. STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights debated the topic of its next resolution, “The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.” Canadian parliamentarian, **Ms. Rempel Garner**, was one of two co-rapporteurs sponsoring the draft resolution on artificial intelligence (AI), along with Ms. Neema Lugangira from Tanzania. Accordingly, they actively attended to the opinions and issues raised by delegates to be included in the resolution.

In her opening remarks to the debate, Ms. Rempel Garner highlighted various preparatory initiatives organized by the IPU in the lead up to the debate that aimed to raise awareness about AI among parliamentarians. They included a series of webinars on AI and a workshop on AI held at the 148th Assembly (see below).

**Ms. Larouche** participated in the preparatory debate, observing that parliaments need to weigh up the advantages and risks associated with AI to democracy, human rights and

the rule of law. She also referred to the passage through the Parliament of Canada of Bill C-27, known in its short form as the Digital Charter Implementation Act, which was at the committee stage in the House of Commons<sup>6</sup>. She also underlined that Canada became the first country to launch a national AI strategy in the form of the Pan Canadian AI Strategy. Based on the contributions from the preparatory debate, the co-rapporteurs will prepare and circulate a draft text of the resolution to member parliaments for consideration at the 149th Assembly in October 2024.

The Standing Committee also held a panel debate on “Sustainable actions to improve the life conditions of people with disabilities, including their chances for education and work opportunities.” **Mr. Maguire** intervened to ask the panelists how they saw artificial intelligence benefitting persons with disabilities in the future. He also asked which types of supports could be provided to children with disabilities as well as their parents. **Senator Black** and **Ms. Damoff** also attended the sitting.

In her capacity as co-rapporteur, **Ms. Rempel Garner** attended the meeting of the Bureau of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. Speaking to the drafting process for the resolution, she stated that she was encouraged by the attention IPU members were paying to the topic, as well as externally, as evident in the high level of participation in the preparatory seminars organized by the IPU in advance of the 148th Assembly.

#### d. STANDING COMMITTEE ON UNITED NATIONS AFFAIRS

As its president, **Mr. McGuinty** chaired the proceedings of the Standing Committee on United Nations (UN) Affairs. Its agenda included a presentation on the newly-established UN Youth Office by the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, Dr. F. Paullier. In his introductory remarks on this item, **Mr. McGuinty** underscored the role that the prevailing crisis in trust of government plays in the hopelessness young people feel today and his support for institutions such as the UN Youth Office as well as national level mechanisms that connect with youth and address their priorities. **Ms. Larouche** took the floor during the discussion that followed, observing, among other issues, that it is essential to continue efforts to ensure that the voices of young people are heard more loudly at the UN-level.

The agenda also included a panel discussion on the sustainability of the UN’s humanitarian work in the context of competing financial priorities and donor fatigue. Representatives from various international agencies addressed the question, including from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). **Mr. Green** contributed to the discussion by commenting on the humanitarian situation in Palestine.

The Standing Committee also adopted a motion, “Reform of the United Nations Security Council.” It calls on parliaments and parliamentarians to:

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<sup>6</sup> [Bill C-27, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session.

- engage with the leadership of their governments and permanent representatives to the UN to obtain regular updates about proposals for reforming the Security Council;
- demand that the reform process is undertaken democratically, inclusively and transparently;
- prepare for the ratification of UN Security Council reform, pursuant to any final General Assembly approval and in accordance with national procedures; and
- engage in parliamentary processes to influence the intergovernmental process leading up to the Summit of the Future to ensure that the voices of parliamentarians are reflected in its outcome document, the Pact for the Future.

**Mr. McGuinty** also presided over the meeting of the Bureau of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs and its review of the committee's achievements and future business pursuant to its new working modalities. He led the discussions on these items by providing an update on the action taken by the Parliament of Canada on the committee's motion on gender equality, which was adopted at the 147th Assembly in Luanda, Angola. He also spoke about his meeting with the UN Secretary-General in New York in February 2024 as well as his participation in the Annual Parliamentary Hearing on the theme "Putting an end to conflicts: Prescriptions for a peaceful future." In addition, he updated the Bureau about the upcoming initial meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament which will take place in Geneva in July 2025.

In this capacity, Mr. McGuinty also delivered the committee's report to the Assembly during its closing session.

#### **4. SPECIAL ACCOUNTABILITY SEGMENT**

The Special Accountability Segment allows delegates to share good practices and concrete actions taken towards the implementation of any IPU resolution or decision. **Ms. Damoff** participated in the segment on behalf of the Canadian delegation. She provided information about how Canada is implementing IPU decisions on "Parliamentary action to tackle climate change." In particular, she highlighted federal support for public and active transportation, outlining various Government of Canada initiatives in this regard. She noted that, since 2015, the federal government had provided more than C\$20 billion in funding to support public transit projects in communities across Canada. She referred to the creation of Canada's first public transit fund, which will become operational in 2026-2027, in which the federal government is investing C\$3 billion a year in support. She emphasized that these investments are intended to help Canada meet its climate targets.

Ms. Damoff also reflected on how the Canadian Group of the IPU regularly fulfills the statutory obligation of all IPU members to inform parliament of IPU Assembly outcomes as well as to communicate them to government and parliamentary leadership as one element of accountability. Specifically, the Canadian Group of the IPU shares such results, including resolutions and declarations, with the Prime Minister, the Speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons, as well as the appropriate ministers and

parliamentary committee chairs, who are encouraged to engage with the Canadian Group regarding their domestic implementation.

## **B. GOVERNING BODIES OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

The IPU's governing bodies, such as the Governing Council, and subsidiary bodies also meet during assemblies.

### **1. GOVERNING COUNCIL**

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the IPU<sup>7</sup>. It is composed of three representatives from each IPU member parliament, provided that its representation includes both men and women parliamentarians (single-gender delegations are limited to one member).

All members of the Canadian delegation attended sittings of the Governing Council. Among its many actions and outcomes, the Governing Council:

- approved the list of future inter-parliamentary meetings as recommended by the Executive Committee, including an inaugural annual Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians to be held in Mexico in March 2025;
- endorsed the composition of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament scheduled to be held in Geneva in July 2025. The Speaker of the Senate – **the Honourable Raymonde Gagné** – and the President of the Canadian Group of the IPU and the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs – **Mr. McGuinty** – are members of the IPU Preparatory Committee; and
- acclaimed a parliamentarian from Democratic Republic of Congo to fill a vacancy from the African Group (see below) on the IPU's Executive Committee.

The Governing Council also received reports or updates on:

- the activities of the IPU President and the impact of the IPU;
- the IPU's financial situation;
- the establishment of IPU regional offices in Uruguay and Egypt;
- activities relating to the IPU priority theme for 2024, peace and security, including the Annual Parliamentary Hearing in New York in February 2024; and
- recent IPU specialized meetings.

The Governing Council also took note of and adopted a number of recommendations by the IPU Executive Committee concerning the situation of certain parliaments, specifically those with:

- non-functioning parliaments (Afghanistan, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Myanmar, Niger and Sudan);

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<sup>7</sup> IPU, [Statutes and Rules of the IPU](#).

- transitional parliaments (Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Libya, Mali and South Sudan);
- parliaments where the political situation is impacting the functioning of parliament (Venezuela, Palestine and Yemen); and
- countries where the political situation constitutes a potential threat to parliament's capacity to function (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eswatini, Peru and Syria).

The following specialized bodies fall under the Governing Council's responsibility and meet at IPU Assemblies. Their reports were presented to the Governing Council and subsequently endorsed:

- Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (in camera)
- Forum of Women Parliamentarians (open session)
- Forum of Young Parliamentarians (open session)
- Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine (in camera)
- Committee on Middle East Questions (in camera)
- Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law (in camera)
- Gender Partnership Group (in camera)
- Advisory Group on Health (in camera)
- High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG) (in camera)
- Group of Facilitators for Cyprus (in camera)
- Working Group on Science and Technology (in camera)

Members of the Canadian delegation attended meetings of the following specialized bodies:

#### a. FORUM OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

The [Forum of Women Parliamentarians](#) meets at IPU assemblies to find ways to redress the gender imbalance both within national parliaments and the IPU, and to ensure that gender perspectives are included in decisions adopted by the IPU membership.

The Forum's agenda at the 148th Assembly included the following items:

- a briefing on recent activities undertaken by the IPU to advance gender equality;
- an exchange of views on the draft resolution of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, "Addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence" being considered at the 148th Assembly; and
- a panel discussion on the topic, "Women peacebuilders advancing sustainable peace."

**Ms. Larouche** and **Ms. Rempel Garner**, a member of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, attended the sitting of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. **Ms. Larouche** participated in the discussion on the draft resolution on "Addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence." In her remarks, she supported its reference to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

on Women, Peace and Security. She underlined that all members of society should benefit from advances in AI-technology and increased attention should be paid to the potential for AI to perpetuate gender biases and other types of discrimination. It was therefore necessary to develop procedures and policies to protect all groups of society from any potential harms.

**Ms. Rempel Garner** attended the meetings of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians as one of four elected representatives of the Twelve Plus Group to this body. In her capacity as co-rapporteur of the draft resolution on AI at the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, she reported on the gender-based points raised during the preparatory debate that took place at the 148th Assembly. She encouraged members of the Bureau to follow the drafting process over the coming months and to provide gender-based input into the text that will be considered at the 149th Assembly. She also objected to another member's proposal that the Bureau issue a statement on global developments given that such is not the mandate of the body.

Ms. Rempel Garner also participated in discussions about setting the Forum's agenda at the next Assembly. Notably, she supported a panel discussion on ending impunity for crimes committed against women and girls in conflict situations, as well as in times of peace, in order to guarantee their access to justice and recovery, as a key element of sustaining and building peace. In making her remarks of support, Ms. Rempel Garner noted that stopping such impunity is essential to sending the message that such acts are not acceptable. She highlighted, in particular, that there are a number of conflicts in the world where gender-based violence is prevalent, but such incidents are not receiving the attention they deserve.

#### b. FORUM OF YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS

The [Forum of Young Parliamentarians](#) works to ensure that youth voices are heard in the IPU's decision-making and to promote youth participation and perspectives in its operation at the political level. At the time of the 148th Assembly, the IPU defined young parliamentarians as persons under the age of 45 years.

The agenda for the Forum at the 148th Assembly focused on the following items:

- an update on youth participation in politics;
- an exchange of views on the theme of the General Debate of the 148th Assembly, "Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding;"
- an exchange of views on the draft resolution of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, "Addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence;" and
- an exchange of views on the draft resolution of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, "Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity."

**Ms. Larouche** attended the meeting of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians. During the update on youth participation in politics, she addressed the Forum, stating that parliamentarians need to more closely scrutinize how events impact young people so that

their voices can be heard. She noted that there had recently been a debate in Canada about lowering the voting age from 18 to 16 years of age, although no changes have as yet been made. More generally, it was challenging to recruit young people into Canadian politics, as there exist financial barriers which hamper young people from running for election. She added that young people are also deterred from entering politics due to online violence. In her intervention, Ms. Larouche also referred to the draft resolution, “Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity,” recommending that it could refer to the Loss and Damage Fund, which was adopted at COP27 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in November 2022.

In addition, Ms. Larouche also intervened during the Forum’s discussion on the General Debate, “Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding.” While highlighting the gendered impact of conflict, she observed that women and young people can play an important role in strengthening peace processes. She noted women’s ongoing exclusion from such processes.

### **C. MEETINGS OF THE GEOPOLITICAL GROUPS**

Article 27 of the [IPU Statutes](#) permits IPU members to form geopolitical groups and 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 is a member of two geopolitical groups within the IPU:

- the 47-member [Twelve Plus Group](#), which includes members from Europe as well as Australia, Israel, New Zealand and Turkey; and
- the 36-member [Asia-Pacific Group](#).

While Canada participates in the activities of both groups, it has two votes in the Twelve Plus Group but only one vote in the Asia-Pacific Group. It only submits candidatures for vacant positions within the IPU through the Twelve Plus Group.

#### **1. TWELVE PLUS GROUP**

The meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were chaired by Mr. Andries Gryffroy of Belgium. The Group’s agenda included discussion on various IPU matters and issues pertaining to its priorities, such as efforts to improve the implementation of IPU resolutions, proposals to amend the organization’s rules and statutes, the ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, and the situation in Israel and Palestine following the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel. The Group discussed at length the various proposed Emergency Items under consideration at the 148th Assembly. Other matters raised included preparations for the 50th anniversary of the Twelve Plus Group; and nominations for the next President of the Twelve Plus Group who will be elected in October 2024. The Group also reviewed its financial situation and received a briefing from its members on the IPU Executive Committee. Finally, the Group filled vacancies in various positions across several IPU bodies allocated to Twelve Plus Group members.

All Canadian delegates attended meetings of the Twelve Plus Group.

- **Mr. McGuinty, Ms. Rempel Garner and Mr. Green** actively participated in the discussions of the Twelve Plus Group on the proposed Emergency Items, before and after the vote in Assembly. **Mr. McGuinty** emphasized procedural points governing the Emergency Item process that are to be respected by all members. He also expressed his regrets on the outcome of the vote, as well as his appreciation of how challenging the topic and the process can be in light of Canada's efforts on the same topic at the 147th Assembly. Based on her experience as chair of the Emergency Item drafting committee at previous Assemblies, **Ms. Rempel Garner** stated that any Emergency Item proposed by members of the Group regarding the conflict in the Middle East would have a greater chance of success if its text were concise and contained just a few action items. This view was accepted through a vote of member delegations. She joined other delegates from Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, and the United Kingdom in shaping such a proposal, the text of which was submitted for consideration by the Assembly<sup>8</sup>. For his part, **Mr. Green** remarked that any Emergency Item on the conflict in the Middle East must not editorialize the humanitarian situation on the ground and should call for a permanent cease-fire.

In her capacity as co-rapporteur, **Ms. Rempel Garner** apprised the Group of preparations concerning the draft resolution on AI at the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights.

Following the IPU President's address to the Group, **Ms. Rempel Garner** thanked the president's parliamentary colleague, Ms. Lugangira (Tanzania), for her work as the co-rapporteur on the next resolution of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, "The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law." She also thanked President Ackson for her support for different IPU capacity-building events targeting parliamentarians on the topic of AI.

During an exchange on possible proposals for amending the IPU's Statutes and Rules, **Mr. McGuinty** shared his experience as a member of the IPU Executive Committee and the unresolved discussions it had had on how to censure members in light of the limitations in existing provisions. He recommended that the efforts of the Working Group of the IPU Executive Committee considering proposed amendments to the IPU's Statutes and Rules be monitored as the process unfolds.

## 2. ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP

The meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) was chaired by the Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, Ms. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury. Its agenda included a briefing on recent meetings of the IPU Executive Committee by the APG representatives to that

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<sup>8</sup> Request for the inclusion of an emergency item in the agenda of the 148th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union submitted by the delegations of Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom, "[Call for urgent action regarding the conflict in the Middle East](#)", 24 March 2024.

committee and a briefing of the most recent meeting of the ASEAN+3 Group<sup>9</sup>. The Group also acclaimed nominees from the Group to fill vacancies allocated to the APG on various bodies of the IPU.

All Canadian delegates attended the meeting. During the Group's discussion on possible Emergency Items, **Mr. Green** underscored the humanitarian crisis that has unfolded in Gaza and the importance of re-igniting diplomatic efforts to achieve a cease-fire.

#### D. OTHER MEETINGS AND SIDE EVENTS

- In his capacity as President of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs, Mr. McGuinty participated in the following additional meetings and activities:
  - Joint Meeting with the Chairs of the Geopolitical Groups and the Presidents of the Standing Committees. Items discussed included various current and future priorities of their mandates. Mr. McGuinty presented a report on the main activities undertaken by the Standing Committee on UN Affairs, as well as expectations for the year ahead in light of high-profile events on the UN calendar, including the Summit of the Future taking place in September 2024. He also noted that the Summit's draft outcome document omitted any references to parliamentarism, which had been flagged to various UN officials during his recent exchanges with them.
  - Assembly Steering Committee. This committee comprises the IPU leadership as well as Presidents of the Standing Committees, the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and the Bureau of Young Parliamentarians. Its mandate is to ensure the effective organization and normal functioning of the Assembly proceedings, including with respect to the Emergency Item process.
  - Special High-Level Meeting, "The crisis of multilateralism: Root causes and possible solutions." Mr. McGuinty presided over this meeting, which was convened to engage Speakers and Deputy Speakers of parliament in advance of the Summit of the Future and the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament taking place in July 2025. Its keynote speakers were Ms. Tatiana Valoyaya, Director-General of the UN Office in Geneva and Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General of the UN Commission on Trade and Development.
- Co-rapporteurs **Ms. Rempel Garner** and Ms. Lugangira led a workshop on artificial intelligence together with the chair of the IPU Working Group on Science and Technology, Mr. Denis Naughten (Ireland). The workshop examined the practical aspects of how parliamentarians have worked on artificial intelligence in their national parliaments and what types of

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<sup>9</sup> The [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\) +3 Group](#) comprises the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

resources they require in the future. **Ms. Damoff** also attended the workshop.

- **Ms. Damoff, Mr. Green and Ms. Larouche** attended the panel discussion titled “From Luanda to the UN Summit of the Future: addressing strategic and existential threats through common security and the rule of law.” It aimed to provide parliamentarians with an update on new peace and security initiatives in the run-up to the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024 and to examine ways of strengthening international law in this area.
- **Mr. Green** intervened in the discussion, stating that the world was on the precipice of climate, economic and democratic collapse. He added that the international situation is not one of the rule of law and, should peace and democracy not prevail, a nuclear catastrophe could be imminent. He noted that parliamentarians should reflect on what is at stake when certain states are allowed to operate with absolute impunity vis-à-vis the framework of international law and international humanitarian law.
- **Ms. Larouche** also took the floor to state that, even though common security is a right, the ever-growing risk of nuclear war is an existential threat, as the current conflict in Ukraine has shown. She noted that parliamentarians should use past events, including the events of Nagasaki and Chornobyl, to raise awareness about the risks presented to humanity by nuclear weapons and encourage their governments to sign the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- **Ms. Larouche** attended a meeting of the Caucus of Francophone Parliamentarians, which was organized by the IPU in cooperation with the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. Ms. Larouche contributed to an exchange among the participants on the issue of conflict and global security.
- **Senator Saint-Germain** participated in the workshop titled “Strengthening climate legislation: Practical tools for parliamentarians.” The event sought to raise awareness among parliamentarians about the availability of tools designed to enhance legislative efforts on climate change.
- **Ms. Larouche** attended the panel discussion on interfaith dialogue titled “Building bridges through interfaith dialogue for more peaceful and inclusive societies.” The event explored the achievements and ongoing challenges relating to parliamentary efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and to protect freedom of religion and belief.
- **Senator Saint-Germain and Ms. Larouche** attended a workshop titled “Human security: Equipping parliamentarians for peacebuilding and conflict prevention.” The event aimed to equip parliamentarians with the knowledge and tools for effective peacebuilding and conflict prevention through applying a human security approach to parliamentary decision-making. **Ms. Larouche** contributed to the discussion, stating, among other issues, that it was difficult to envision how human security can be strengthened when no common ground for dialogue can be found in the current global context.

- **Mr. Green** and **Ms. Larouche** attended the side event titled “Workshop on the Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.” It focused on preventing the misuse and proliferation of chemical weapons through the application of strong legislation at the national level. The Canadian delegates made multiple interventions during the discussion. **Mr Green** raised a question of clarification regarding the status of tear gas under international law when used by police forces domestically for crowd control purposes. He also remarked that more oversight was needed regarding the export of components used in the production of chemical weapons, particularly to countries with poor human rights records. He stated that international trade agreements could be used to put pressure on countries that violate international law where the use of chemical weapons is concerned. **Ms. Larouche** asked a question regarding the regulation of states that did not produce prohibited weapons, but potentially had access to them through international military alliances.
- The Ambassador and Head of Canada’s Permanent Mission in Geneva briefed the delegation on current issues and priorities in advancing Canadian interests at UN entities based in Geneva.

## E. BILATERAL MEETINGS

Members of the Canadian delegation held bilateral meetings with parliamentary delegates from various countries including:

- Afghanistan (**Senator Black, Ms. Damoff, Mr. Green, Ms. Larouche and Mr. Maguire**);<sup>10</sup>
- Myanmar (**Senator Black, Senator Saint-Germain, Ms. Damoff, Mr. Green, Ms. Larouche and Mr. Maguire**);<sup>11</sup> and
- Thailand (**Senator Saint-Germain**).

These exchanges provided a strategic opportunity for the Canadian Group to engage in parliamentary diplomacy and to increase their understanding of the situation in other countries and regions.

Members of the Canadian delegation also held bilateral meetings with representatives from different international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Ms. Damoff had a bilateral meeting with representatives of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, which has permanent observer status at the IPU. **Senator Black, Ms. Damoff and Ms. Larouche** held a bilateral meeting with representatives of the World Health Organization’s Coordinated Resource Mobilization unit.

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<sup>10</sup> After the Parliament of Afghanistan was dissolved by the Taliban regime in 2021, the IPU governing bodies took the decision not to recognize the Taliban regime. Instead, it has allowed the exiled members of the dissolved parliament to continue to participate in the work of the IPU in a non-voting observer capacity.

<sup>11</sup> Similar to the situation in Afghanistan, following the military’s refusal to recognize the results of the 2020 elections in Myanmar, the IPU governing bodies recognized the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the legislative body of elected parliamentarians in exile, to attend the IPU’s meetings to represent Myanmar in a non-voting observer capacity.

## F. DOMESTIC FOLLOW-UP ON ASSEMBLY OUTCOMES

Article 7 of the IPU Statutes requires that members take appropriate domestic action to inform their parliaments and governments of IPU resolutions in order to “stimulate their implementation.”<sup>12</sup> In furtherance of this requirement, and in addition to the presentation of this report in Parliament, correspondence will be sent on behalf of the Canadian Group to relevant parliamentarians and officials informing them of the resolutions adopted by the IPU at its assemblies in 2024 and encouraging them to engage with the Canadian Group regarding their domestic implementation. Letters concerning the outcomes of the 148th Assembly will be sent to:

- The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister;
- Ministers of:
  - Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities;
  - Environment and Climate Change;
  - Energy and Natural Resources;
  - Families, Children and Social Development;
  - Foreign Affairs;
  - International Development;
  - National Defence;
  - Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs; and
  - Women, Gender Equality and Youth.
- The Speaker of the Senate;
- The Speaker of the House of Commons;
- The Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standing Senate Committees on:
  - Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources;
  - Foreign Affairs and International Trade;
  - Human Rights;
  - National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs; and
  - Social Affairs, Science and Technology.
- The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of House of Commons Standing Committees on:
  - Environment and Sustainable Development;
  - Foreign Affairs and International Development, and its Sub-Committee on International Human Rights;
  - National Defence;
  - Natural Resources; and

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<sup>12</sup> IPU, [Statutes of the IPU, Article 7](#).

- Status of Women.

### **Travel Expenses**

Travel expenses associated with this activity can be found in the delegation's financial report. This report is available in the [Financial Disclosure](#) section of the Parliamentary Diplomacy website.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Rob Oliphant, P.C., M.P.

President of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union