

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

Report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

149th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings

Geneva, Switzerland

October 13 to 17, 2024

REPORT

A delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (UIPU) attended the [149th IPU Assembly](#) and Related Meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, from 13 to 17 October 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;
- The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator, Vice-President of the Canadian Group;
- The Honourable Michelle Rempel Garner, P.C., M.P.;
- The Honourable Brent Cotter, Senator; and
- Ms. Jenny Kwan, M.P.

The delegation was assisted during the 149th Assembly by the association secretary of the UIPU, 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 an Assembly.

The Canadian delegation joined over 630 parliamentarians from 129 IPU member parliaments at the 149th Assembly to debate the overall theme, “Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future.” Ms. Rempel Garner was also instrumental as a co-rapporteur in the Assembly’s adoption of a resolution on artificial intelligence (AI) proposed by the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights.

Moreover, Canadian delegates played leadership roles in drafting and adopting an emergency resolution expressing support for multilateralism through the United Nations (UN) system and other global institutions. They also actively participated in meetings of various subsidiary bodies focusing on women parliamentarians, peace and security, sustainable development, and United Nations (UN) affairs. Among other activities, Canadian delegates attended numerous side events on such topics as disarmament, women’s and children’s health, and child labour, and had numerous bilateral meetings.

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.¹

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 149th Assembly, 181 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.²

THE 149th ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION ³

The Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the IPU on political issues.⁴ 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 129 member parliaments and eight associate members took part in the 149th Assembly. They comprised over 630 parliamentarians, including 54 Presiding Officers and 36 Deputy Presiding Officers. Of this number, 224 were women parliamentarians (36.4% of participating parliamentarians) and 153 were parliamentarians under the age of 45 (24.9% of participating parliamentarians).

A. AGENDA AND OUTCOMES

The agenda for the 149th Assembly included various items and its outcomes included:

- the adoption of the Geneva Declaration on the overall theme of the general debate, “Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future;”
- the adoption of a resolution entitled, “The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on democracy, human rights and the rule of law,” submitted by the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights;
- amendments to the IPU's Statutes and Rules; and
- a Special Accountability Segment.

Canadian delegates played prominent roles in advancing these agenda items.

1. GENERAL DEBATE

¹ See: IPU, [“About us”](#); and IPU, [Statutes and Rules](#).

² IPU, [Members](#).

³ Detailed reports and information on the 149th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings are available on the IPU website. See IPU, [“Outcomes,”](#) 147th IPU Assembly.

⁴ IPU, [Statutes and Rules](#).

Mr. McGuinty joined 143 parliamentarians from 113 member parliaments in deliberating the overall theme of the Assembly and contributing to the Geneva Declaration:

Mr. McGuinty shared with fellow delegates several examples from the Canadian energy, agricultural and health sectors to illustrate how science, technology and innovation can make the world more sustainable as well as the potential for improvement. He noted that progress in this area is not without challenges and opportunities relating to digital technologies, as highlighted in the UN's recently adopted Pact for the Future and its accompanying Global Digital Compact. He also underscored the need for international cooperation on AI safety, including as regards examining potential intergovernmental oversight mechanisms and standard-setting.

Drawing on the debate, the Geneva Declaration – endorsed at the end of the Assembly – emphasizes the resolve of parliamentarians to harness and regulate science, technology and innovation (STI) for the benefit of humanity. The declaration stresses the need to protect human rights and foster international cooperation in STI governance. The declaration notes, among other things, that:

- parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to develop and implement ethical frameworks for good governance of STIs;
- particular attention must be paid to the situation of women, youth and groups in vulnerable or marginalized situations who risk being left behind in the digital age;
- the potential risks and challenges posed by emerging technologies must be monitored, and the necessary and pre-emptive action must be taken to mitigate the negative impacts; and
- evidence-based and efficient policymaking play key roles in fostering a culture of scientific inquiry and innovation.

a. SPECIAL SEGMENT ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION

The General Debate included a special segment to mark the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. During this segment, **Ms. Kwan** reminded fellow delegates that Canadian parliamentarians had frequently raised awareness on issues of anti-personnel mines at IPU Assemblies and specifically the importance of ratifying the Convention, also known as the “Ottawa Treaty.” She also paid tribute to the victims and their families and honoured the survivors of anti-personnel mines. In light of ongoing global challenges and a need to continue efforts to address them, she called on delegates to draw encouragement from the role parliamentarians played in realizing the Ottawa Treaty. She also urged those countries that had not yet ratified the Treaty to do so.

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.⁵

At the 149th Assembly, **Canada** supported the sponsoring delegations of France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands in their efforts to include an emergency item that recommits parliamentarians to multilateralism through the United Nations (UN) system and other global institutions. The proposed emergency item sought to respond to the deep concern recently expressed by the UN Secretary General over the state of global affairs and his emphasis on the need for comprehensive action to address the multitude of interconnected challenges and crises. The draft text called on IPU member parliaments to ensure that national governments:

- respect the UN Charter;
- redouble their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; and
- fully implement the newly adopted Pact for the Future.

It also expressed the IPU’s full commitment to strengthen multilateralism and efforts to reform the system to ensure its legitimacy and efficiency.

The Canadian delegation also consulted with fellow delegates and the IPU Secretariat to ensure that the emergency item process was procedurally sound given that some proposals were submitted only on the day before the vote.

Delegations were asked to vote to select one emergency item from among the following proposals:

- “Response by parliamentarians to the urgent plea by the UN Secretary General to recommit to multilateralism for global peace, justice and sustainability,” submitted by the delegations of France, United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada;
- “Enforcing UN General Assembly resolution ES-10/24 and ensuring accountability,” submitted by the delegation of Palestine on behalf of the Arab Group (see below for discussion of IPU groups);
- “The security and humanitarian situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” submitted by the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); and
- “Mobilizing parliamentarians for the protection of children in armed conflicts to avoid risks, suffering and consequences,” submitted by the delegations of Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana.

Canada cast its votes in favour of the proposals on multilateralism and on children in armed conflict. Although these two proposals received the required two-thirds majority of the votes cast, according to the IPU Statutes and Rules, the proposal receiving the

⁵ IPU, [Statutes and Rules](#). 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. Canada has 15 votes to allocate any number of ways for and against the proposed emergency items.

highest number of positive votes was selected. It followed that the proposal on multilateralism was added to the agenda of the 149th Assembly.

Once an item is selected, a debate is held in the Assembly on the topic. A drafting committee is formed to negotiate the final text of the resolution on the emergency item, the first draft of which is that submitted by the sponsor. Ms. Rempel Garner represented Canada as one of two Twelve Plus Group members appointed to the drafting committee by the 149th Assembly, the other being from Germany. The two were joined by representatives from Argentina, Australia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Iran, Jordan, Mexico, Palestine and Russia. In that role, she guided its members through challenging negotiations and consideration of proposed amendments to finalize the emergency item's text. She had played the same role at the 145th Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda and the 146th Assembly in Manama, Bahrain.

3. STANDING COMMITTEES

b. STANDING COMMITTEE ON PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The agenda of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security included panel discussions on the role of parliamentarians in such as issues as preventing conflicts over natural resources as well as nuclear security. It also held an expert hearing followed by a preparatory debate on the topic of its next resolution, "The role of parliaments in advancing a two-State solution in Palestine."

Ms. Kwan attended these sessions. She contributed to the exchange concerning conflicts over natural resources, emphasizing that such discussions require greater consideration of – and respect for – the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. More specifically, any energy or resource extraction project on Indigenous lands must involve Indigenous communities. Accordingly, the full implementation of UNDRIP could significantly reduce conflicts linked to natural resources. Ms. Kwan also noted the importance of taking a long-term view, as Indigenous communities do, as resource extraction had significant implications for future generations.

Ms. Kwan also participated in the preparatory debate on the draft resolution concerning a two-State solution in Palestine. In particular, she called on the Canadian government, in addition to supporting a two-State solution, to also recognize the State of Palestine, which many countries have already done. As well, she called on the Government of Canada to avoid any complicity in the humanitarian crisis ensuing in Gaza by imposing an arms embargo on Israel and removing any loopholes that permit arms transfers. Finally, Ms. Kwan urged the Canadian government to impose sanctions on key figures in the Israeli Government who had incited genocide and violence. She argued that there should be no impunity for terrorism, for the incitement of genocide or for annexation. She expressed the hope that the IPU Assembly would take steps to spread a message of peace and justice for all

c. STANDING COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development met to debate the topic of its next resolution, "Parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-lasting impact of conflicts, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development." The committee also held

preparations for the Parliamentary Meeting at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Azerbaijan as well as an expert hearing on the theme, “Towards a fair global financial system: The role of parliaments in preventing corporate tax avoidance and achieving sustainable development.” **Senator Cotter** and **Ms. Kwan** attended these sessions.

Ms. Kwan contributed to the exchange on COP29, noting that Canada was among many countries that were not meeting its targets. To do so, she urged the Canadian government to address corporate non-compliance with tax obligations in order to generate the necessary levels of national revenue for federal expenditures. She also called on it to stop subsidizing the oil and gas industry, and investing in false green energy investments, which served only to undermine genuine efforts to address the problem. Instead, funds should be reinvested into green technology and energy, and energy efficiency.

Ms. Kwan also participated in the discussions on tax avoidance. She cautioned that parliamentarians should be wary of decarbonization funds, which allowed for investments in selective technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, as such technologies had not significantly reduced emissions in recent decades. Instead, reductions on oil and gas companies should be enforced through regulations. Ms. Kwan urged parliamentarians to consider imposing an excessive profit tax in the oil and gas sector, and pay attention to the different methods of tax avoidance, such as through subsidies.

d. STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights considered a draft resolution entitled “The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.” As co-rapporteur, **Ms. Rempel Garner** played a prominent role in the committee’s consideration of the 194 amendments submitted by 26 member parliaments as well as three amendments proposed by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.

Senator Ataullahjan also actively participated in the committee’s work on behalf of the Canadian delegation. In her remarks, she drew attention to the potential of AI decisions to include inaccuracies and discriminate. Accordingly, AI could undermine human rights, equality and individual freedoms. She supported the draft resolution’s emphasis on the importance of enhancing parliamentarians’ knowledge of AI in order to carry out their unique responsibilities to develop strong AI legal frameworks and policies.

The amended resolution was adopted by consensus by the Standing Committee and, later, following its presentation by **Ms. Rempel Garner** and her co-rapporteur, by the Assembly. It calls on parliaments to adopt or strengthen legal frameworks and policies that allow for the responsible creation, deployment and use of AI technology. The resolution also recognizes the disproportionate impact of AI on women and girls, and urges parliamentary action that mitigates the risks of AI to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It underscores that parliamentarians from around the world share concerns about AI and are interested in learning more about the opportunities it presents. More importantly, it highlights that parliamentarians have an important role to play in joining other stakeholders and ensuring a united effort to maximize the benefits of AI, while mitigating risks to humanity.

The Standing Committee also endorsed “Recognizing and supporting the victims of illegal international adoption and taking measures to prevent this practice” as the subject item for its next resolution, with representatives from Argentina, Belgium and India as the co-rapporteurs. The topic will be debated at the 150th IPU Assembly in April 2025, following which the co-rapporteurs will circulate a draft text to member parliaments for consideration at the 151st IPU Assembly in October 2025.

e. 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 briefing on how the UN system is financed, one of the focus areas of the Standing Committee’s workplan. It also included panel discussions on the role of parliaments in implementing UN treaties, as well as the relationship between the UN and the G20.

Members were also invited to report on any action taken to implement the two motions adopted by the Standing Committee at previous Assemblies: “Bringing gender equality to the UN General Assembly” and “Reform of the United Nations Security Council.” In his introductory remarks on this agenda item, **Mr. McGuinty** reminded members that the adoption of motions is a recent element of the Standing Committee’s working modalities and that the two themes addressed in these motions are consistent with its focus areas. He noted from the Canadian perspective that, as part of its actions to implement these motions, the Canadian Group of the IPU shared these two motions with the prime minister and presiding officers of the Senate of Canada and the House of Commons, as well as with government ministers and chairs of parliamentary committees whose mandates touch on these themes. He also highlighted the December 2023 report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on Canada’s foreign service which recommended that Global Affairs Canada undertake measures to support the recruitment and advancement of women and other traditionally underrepresented groups in the foreign service. Mr. McGuinty also drew attention to a Library of Parliamentary publication on Canadian women in diplomacy which referenced the motion on gender equality at the UN General Assembly adopted by the IPU’s Standing Committee on UN Affairs.

Senator Ataullahjan, Senator Cotter and Ms. Kwan also attended these sessions.

Mr. McGuinty also presided over the meeting of the Bureau of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs and its review of the committee’s achievements and future business pursuant to its working modalities. He led the discussions on these items by highlighting recent IPU activities at the United Nations, including the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as well as the Summit of the Future and its advocacy on the Pact for the Future. He also briefed members on the preparations for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament at the UN scheduled to take place in July 2025 and of whose Preparatory Committee he is a member by virtue of his position as President of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs.

In his capacity as President of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs, **Mr. McGuinty** also delivered its 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. Senator Ataullahjan participated in the segment on behalf of the Canadian delegation. She spoke about the Manama Declaration, unanimously endorsed by the IPU at the 146th Assembly which took place in March 2023, and its focus on promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies in order to fight intolerance. As she did when she participated in the General Debate on the topic at that Assembly, she reiterated the work of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights of which she is Chair, concerning Islamophobia in Canada, as well as anti-black racism, sexism and systemic discrimination at the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the wider federal public service to illustrate the role parliaments can play in fighting intolerance.

Senator Ataullahjan 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 shared the Manama Declaration 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.⁶ 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 the sittings of the Governing Council. Among its many actions and outcomes, the Governing Council:

- approved the financial results for 2024;
- approved the 2025 consolidated budget;
- accepted Jamaica as the 181st member of the IPU;
- endorsed "Advancing gender equality" as the IPU's priority theme for 2025;
- amended the IPU's Statutes and Rules;
- endorsed the IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology; and
- elected a parliamentarian from Peru to fill a vacancy from the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (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;

⁶ IPU, [Statutes and Rules](#).

- the establishment of IPU regional offices in Uruguay and Egypt;
- recent IPU specialized meetings; and
- preparations for the quinquennial World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and the Fifteenth Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament taking place in July 2025.

Ms. Kwan participated in the discussion that followed the IPU President's report on her activities, specifically regarding her visit to Saint Petersburg, Russia in July 2024 to speak at the BRICS Parliamentary Forum and her subsequent meeting with the President of the Russian Federation. Ms. Kwan called on the IPU President to provide answers to the questions raised about the content of her discussions with President Putin, particularly about what she communicated to him concerning the illegal war Russia is waging against Ukraine, the IPU's resolutions on the subject and his response. She emphasized the importance of receiving such answers to demonstrate the IPU President's accountability concerning such meetings. Ms. Kwan reiterated Canada's position that it stands with Ukraine.

As President of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs and delegate to the event, **Mr. McGuinty** reported on the IPU's Parliamentary Forum held on 16 July 2024 at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York. He noted that the discussions centred on two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review at the Forum: SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 13 on climate action. The discussions emphasized that parliamentarians must evaluate their country's performance to determine how best to achieve the SDG targets by 2030, including by integrating related plans into national budgets, institutionalizing the SDGs and putting governance in order. More adequate and accessible financing was also needed, especially from the private sector, to implement the Paris Agreement, with developed countries assisting developing countries as the least responsible for – but most affected by – climate change.

The Governing Council also reviewed and took note of the situation of certain parliaments, specifically those with:

- non-functioning parliaments (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kuwait, Myanmar, Niger, Sudan);
- transitional parliaments (Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Libya, Mali, South Sudan);
- parliaments whose functioning was potentially threatened by a political situation (Syria); and
- parliaments whose functioning was impacted by a political situation (Palestine, Venezuela, Yemen).

It reiterated its previous decisions to suspend Sudan and to allow members of the dissolved parliaments of Afghanistan and Myanmar to attend IPU Assemblies as non-voting observers.

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 in national parliaments and within the IPU, and to ensure that gender perspectives are included in decisions adopted by the IPU membership.

The Forum's agenda at the 149th Assembly included the following items:

- a briefing on recent activities undertaken by the IPU to advance gender equality;
- an exchange of views from a gender perspective on the draft resolution being considered at the 149th Assembly by the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, "The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law;" and
- a panel discussion entitled, "Sustaining peace and providing justice to women and girls."

Senator Ataullahjan, Ms. Kwan and **Ms. Rempel Garner**, a member of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, attended sittings of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. As co-rapporteur of the draft resolution on AI, **Ms. Rempel Garner** opened the discussion on this agenda item by emphasizing the potential impact of a massive technological transformation on national economies and, in turn, on the fabric of civil societies. Although the rapid and widespread use of AI had already begun to affect decision-making, international guardrails on AI were largely lacking. She noted that the goals of the draft resolution were twofold: (1) to recognize that technological transformation had and continued to have an impact on democracy and human rights; and (2) to build capacity within parliaments and in the IPU to address the technological transformation proactively and productively. She also underscored the importance of ensuring that all regions, including the Global South, were equitably represented in any global framework regulating AI.

Ms. Kwan also participated in this discussion. She noted that AI could be used to target women in politics, women human rights defenders and young women activists. Women

in those roles faced misogynistic coverage amplified by social media algorithms and biased algorithmic filters and were often victims of online gender-based violence and harassment exacerbated by AI, such as pornographic and intimate deepfakes, which were used to undermine their reputation and ongoing political engagement. The objective was to silence women and send a message that women did not belong in politics. Ms. Kwan emphasized that parliamentarians must be cognizant that AI training systems often confirmed gender bias. It was critical to incorporate gender-sensitive data into the training and development of AI. Legislation and regulatory practices should also be put in place.

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. As co-rapporteur, she briefed members about the status of the draft resolution on artificial intelligence that is on the agenda at the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights at the 149th Assembly. She invited Bureau members to actively participate in the discussions on the draft resolution at the Forum of Women Parliamentarians as well as at the Standing Committee. Following the resolution's adoption, she briefed the Bureau on the deliberations that transpired at the Standing Committee and expressed her satisfaction that it reflected a gender perspective on the issue. Drawing from her experience as chair of the Emergency Item's drafting committee at the 149th and other Assemblies, Ms. Rempel Garner reiterated her recommendation that the rules governing its composition be amended to ensure gender balance. She also participated in discussions about setting the Forum's agenda at the 150th Assembly which would focus in part on the various gender equality milestones occurring in 2025, including the 40th Anniversary of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. She also accepted the Bureau's nomination to serve as rapporteur for the Forum's consideration at the 150th Assembly of the draft resolution on a two-State solution at the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security.

C. 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 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 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 at the 149th Assembly were chaired by Mr. Andries Gryffroy (Belgium). The Group's agenda included discussions on various IPU matters and issues pertaining to its priorities, such as proposals to amend the

organization's rules and statutes, the ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Middle East. Notably, the Group extensively deliberated its submission of an Emergency Item on multilateralism for consideration at the 149th Assembly, as well as those proposed by other delegations and groups on other topics. The Group also reviewed its financial situation and heard a briefing from its members on the IPU Executive Committee. It also filled vacancies in various positions across several IPU bodies allocated to its members. Finally, the Group acclaimed Mr. Laurent Wehrli (Switzerland) as its president for a two-year term.

All Canadian delegates attended meetings of the 12+ Group.

- During the discussions about the IPU President's visit to Saint Petersburg, Russia in July 2024 to speak at the BRICS Parliamentary Forum and her subsequent meeting with the President of the Russian Federation, **Ms. Rempel Garner** raised concerns about the lack of transparency about what was discussed. She also insisted that any meeting between the head of the world's largest parliamentary group and a head of state receive prior authorization and a mandate from the Executive Committee, and that the content of the discussions be reported to the IPU. For his part, **Mr. McGuinty** underscored the importance of the IPU President receiving the necessary support for her activities from the Secretariat to avoid such incidents in the future. **Senator Ataullahjan** also expressed her concerns regarding the IPU President's outreach to the Russian president and lack of transparency.
- During the discussions on an Emergency Item, **Mr. McGuinty** drew from experience to underscore that the process concerns highly divisive topics and that the failure to select an Emergency Item at previous Assemblies should be taken as a statement of how polarized the world has become. He and **Ms. Rempel Garner** also contributed to the Group's exchanges on the IPU's procedures governing the Emergency Item process and raised concerns about certain proposals being deemed admissible by the Assembly Steering Committee despite having been submitted only on the day before the vote to select an Emergency Item by the Assembly. **Ms. Rempel Garner** was also selected by the Group as one of two representatives on the Emergency Item Drafting Committee. **Senator Ataullahjan** expressed regrets that, to achieve consensus, the final text of the Emergency Item omitted any reference to the multitude of conflicts and crises in the world. For her part, **Ms. Kwan** noted her disappointment that, given the severity of the humanitarian crisis taking place in Gaza, the Emergency Item did not refer to the two-State solution.
- **Ms. Rempel Garner** briefed the Group about the status of the draft resolution on artificial intelligence that is on the agenda at the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights at the 149th Assembly. She invited Twelve Plus members to actively participate in the discussions on the draft resolution at the Standing Committee and to support its adoption. The Group congratulated Ms. Rempel Garner for the success in her efforts.
- During the discussions about IPU matters, **Mr. McGuinty** noted that the organization's financial expenditures will require continued scrutiny to

ensure value for the contribution fees paid by the membership in a time of global economic turmoil. He underscored that each member of the IPU, including the Canadian Group of the IPU, is ultimately accountable to its own parliament for ensuring such value.

- In his capacity as President of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs and as one of the Group's representatives on its Bureau, **Mr. McGuinty** reported on the committee's activities at the 149th Assembly.

The Group also organized an event at the 149th Assembly to mark its 50th anniversary, which was attended by all Canadian delegates. Past presidents of the Twelve Plus Group were honoured at the event, including former Canadian parliamentarian and now the IPU's Permanent Observer to the UN in New York, Ms. Paddy Torsney, who held the position in 2006. Senator Peter Bosa served as the Twelve Plus Group president from 1995 to 1996.

2. ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP

The meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) was chaired by China, which assumed the position in light of the political instability that erupted in Bangladesh, the Group's designated chair for 2024. Its agenda included a briefing on recent meetings of the IPU Executive Committee by the APG representatives from Australia and India to that committee and a briefing of the most recent meeting of the ASEAN+3 Group.⁷ Delegates also conducted elections to fill vacancies on the various bodies of the IPU allocated to the Group. Delegations are allocated only one vote.

Mr. McGuinty, Senator Ataullahjan, Senator Cotter and **Ms. Kwan** attended the meeting.

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 the various current and future priorities of their mandates. Mr. McGuinty presented a report on the main activities undertaken by the UN Affairs committee, as well as expectations for the year ahead in light of high-profile events on the UN calendar. He highlighted the recently adopted Pact for the Future, which recognized the importance of the UN's engagement with national parliaments and committed to a deepening of the UN's engagement with the IPU.
 - Assembly Steering Committee. This committee comprises the IPU leadership as well as Presidents of the Standing Committees, the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and the

⁷ 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.

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. It was during the committee's meetings that Mr. McGuinty raised concerns about the admissibility of certain proposed Emergency Items at the 149th Assembly.

- Meeting with the President of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development. Mr. McGuinty and his counterpart discussed opportunities for collaboration on issues of overlapping interest.
 - Meeting with Mr. Michael Møller (Denmark), former Under-Secretary-General of the UN and former Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva. Mr. McGuinty followed-up with Mr. Moller on his presentation to the Preparatory Committee of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in May 2024. Among other topics, they discussed the state and future of multilateralism generally as well as the Summit of the Future and the Pact for the Future adopted by UN members at that Summit specifically.
- **Senator Ataullahjan** participated in the Parity Debate, “Pushing back on the pushback: Men and women MPs preserving and advancing gender equality.” In her remarks, she noted that gender parity had been achieved in the Canadian Senate and Cabinet, and that Canada ranked high in terms of gender parity in education, health and life expectancy. However, she expressed concern that, more generally, fewer than half of Canada’s total parliamentary representatives were women and, since 2006, the persistent and sizeable wage gap in North America has not narrowed. She was equally concerned that feminist initiatives were largely performative. Senator Ataullahjan also highlighted that a few months ago the Senate of Canada adopted her motion calling on the Government of Canada to recognize that Afghanistan was experiencing gender apartheid. Accordingly, she underscored the role parliamentarians can play in championing meaningful gender equality nationally and globally.
 - **Senator Cotter** moderated discussions at the “Workshop on Parliamentary leadership in disarmament: Preventing and alleviating human suffering caused by weapon proliferation.” The workshop sought to raise awareness among parliamentarians of the various knowledge, tools, and strategies available to support humanitarian disarmament efforts. **Ms. Kwan** contributed to the exchanges among participants, highlighting the important role that parliamentarians can play in scrutinizing arms transfers carried out by governments that may violate international law and contribute to the violation of human rights, such as in the Middle East.
 - **Senator Ataullahjan** participated in a by invitation-only consultation on inter-faith dialogue for peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies convened by the IPU Secretary-General. Entitled, “Parliamentary

diplomacy: Building bridges for interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence,” the consultation considered the unique role parliamentarians play in countering intolerance, particularly by legislating protections of the rights of citizens. Moreover, it sought to put parliamentary diplomacy into practice by engaging parliamentarians from different backgrounds in a discussion of the challenges to social cohesion that are grounded in religion, belief or culture, and in consideration of the avenues to promote peaceful coexistence.

- **Senator Ataullahjan** and **Ms. Kwan** also attended workshops on women’s and children’s health, child labour as well as advancing women’s political participation and feminist decision-making.

E. BILATERAL MEETINGS

Members of the Canadian delegation held bilateral meetings and informal discussions with parliamentary delegates from countries including:

- Afghanistan (**Senator Ataullahjan** and **Ms. Kwan**); ⁸
- the People’s Republic of China (**Mr. McGuinty** and **Senator Ataullahjan**);
- Israel (**Mr. McGuinty**, **Senator Ataullahjan**, **Senator Cotter** and **Ms. Rempel Garner**);
- Malawi (**Senator Cotter** and **Senator Ataullahjan**); and
- Ukraine (**Mr. McGuinty**, **Senator Ataullahjan**, **Ms. Rempel Garner** and **Ms. Kwan**).

These exchanges provide a strategic opportunity for the Canadian Group to engage in parliamentary diplomacy, to increase its understanding of other countries and regions, to discuss key bilateral and international issues, and to work towards shared multilateral goals, including in the context of the work of the IPU. Topics discussed included:

- perspectives on various IPU matters;
- artificial intelligence;
- prevalence of human rights violations, particularly women’s rights;
- the need for greater maternal health care provision and family planning;
- challenges in advancing sustainable development;
- current issues in global peace and security, multilateralism as well as efforts to address specific crises; and
- the value of parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary friendship groups.

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.”⁹ In furtherance of this requirement, and in addition to the presentation

⁸ 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.

⁹ IPU, [Statutes, Article 7](#).

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 149th Assembly will be sent to:

- The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister
- Ministers of:
 - Foreign Affairs;
 - International Development;
 - National Defence;
 - Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs;
 - Women and 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:
 - Foreign Affairs and International Trade;
 - Human Rights;
 - National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs;
 - Social Affairs, Science and Technology.
- The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of House of Commons Standing Committees on:
 - Foreign Affairs and International Development, and its Sub-Committee on International Human Rights;
 - National Defence;
 - Public Safety and National Security;
 - 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, Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union