

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the 58th Session of the United
Nations Commission on the Status of Women**

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**New York, New York, United States of America
March 11, 2014**

Report

1. Introduction

A Canadian delegation participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) parliamentary event organized with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and held during the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) on 11 March 2014 at the UN Headquarters in New York City. The IPU's theme was *At the crossroads of sustainable development and gender equality: the role of parliaments*, which complemented the UNCSW's priority theme for the 58th Session, that being *Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls*. The IPU's parliamentary event was attended by parliamentarians from national and regional parliaments, as well as government officials and representatives of international organizations.

2. Agenda¹

In parallel with the priority theme for the UNCSW, the theme of the IPU event was *At the crossroads of sustainable development and gender equality: the role of parliaments*, which focused on three key areas: (1) *Women in decision-making: tracking progress over 10 years of MDGs*; (2) *The role of parliaments in implementation and accountability of the MDGs*; and (3) *The place of gender equality in the next set of development goals*. The event provided Canadian parliamentarians with the opportunity to expand their knowledge of the progress achieved in the implementation of the MDGs at the international level, and learn about the contribution of other countries, as well as UN Women and the IPU, in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda.

3. The Canadian Delegation

The Canadian delegation included the following Members of Parliament:

- Ms. Susan Truppe, Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women
- Ms. H el ene LeBlanc, Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women

The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Laura Munn-Rivard, Analyst, Legal and Social Affairs Division, Library of Parliament.

4. Summary of Event and Canadian Participation

¹ Agenda and other documents related to the event are available at the IPU's parliamentary event website, [At the crossroads of sustainable development and gender equality: the role of parliaments](#).

Opening Session

The Secretary-General of the IPU, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, gave the first remarks, recognizing the very important cooperation between the IPU and UN Women. Mr. Johnsson said that as parliamentarians continue their work on gender equality, they must remember five key messages:

1. Without women's participation, there can be only limited development;
2. Change is possible, as exemplified by the increase of women as members of parliament worldwide;
3. Women's rights are a priority and time is of the essence;
4. Women's voices must be acknowledged and they must be given decision-making power; and
5. Parliament is an actor of development, as healthy development requires democratic governance.

Mr. Johnsson finished his remarks by highlighting the IPU's progress in encouraging women's participation in official IPU meetings and parliamentary delegations and in increasing women's participation in all bodies within the IPU. The IPU has become a gender-sensitive organization that mainstreams gender in all work.

The Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, spoke next and expressed her appreciation for the relationship between UN Women and the IPU. She believed the increase of women's participation in legislatures is an important development. According to Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, having a higher percentage of women in parliaments leads to an increase in deliberation of legislation related to families, health and gender equality; to greater pressure for accountability from the government; and to the enhancement of different perspectives and voices in the legislative process.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka congratulated countries on the increased participation rates of women in parliaments, but she reminded members that the focus should be not only on female representation, but also on the quality of the women being sent to parliaments. She acknowledged that the IPU's recent data indicates that women could reach gender parity at the parliamentary level globally in the next twenty years; while she said that was fantastic news, she stated "but I don't have twenty years."

Ms. Mlambo Ngcuka spoke of the upcoming 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. She recommended that each parliament conduct a review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; she suggested that parliaments could

review a different commitment each month, with the goal of finishing the full review in approximately a year's time.

In addition, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka addressed the role that boys and men play in promoting gender equality. She said that parliamentarians must engage and mobilize boys and men in the fight for gender equality. UN Women has launched a campaign, "He For She," which encourages men to speak out in support of women's rights.

Moving on to the implementation of the MDGs, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka stated that parliaments are key to this process and that women must know that parliamentarians and the countries of the UN are "in their corner." She explained that the MDGs have provided evidence that women are significant to the development processes, and that gender equality must be part of the post-2015 development agenda.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka highlighted UN Women's recommendation for a standalone goal for women in the post-2015 development agenda. The organization proposes three target areas for the post-2015 agenda: (1) ending violence against women and girls; (2) gender distribution of capabilities (such as access to resources and opportunities); and (3) gender equality in decision-making power in both public and private spheres. As well, gender should be mainstreamed in all other development goals, which would allow for specific gender targets for each goal and tracking of gender-specific progress.

Session 1: Women in decision-making: Tracking progress over 10 years of Millennium Development Goals

The theme for the morning session was *Women in decision-making: tracking progress over 10 years of MDGs*, which focused on women's presence in decision-making positions across the corporate, judicial and civil society sectors and how to reform work environments to increase the presence of women.

Ms. Z. Hilal, of the *Gender Partnership Programme at the IPU*, spoke of the latest trends related to women in politics internationally. She said that women's representation in parliaments was at 21.8% in January 2014, compared to 15.7% in 2005. This was the first time the global average had increased by as much as 1.5 percentage points in a year. As well, 54 parliamentary chambers had surpassed the widely-recognized 30% benchmark for women's representation, up from 50 chambers in 2012. Ms. Hilal said that in January 2014, there were 18 women heads of state or government, compared to 8 in 2005. Also, the world average of women in ministerial positions was 17.2%, compared to 14.3% in 2005, and these ministerial positions were more diversified, including traditionally male-dominated portfolios such as defence and foreign affairs.

Ms. Hilal discussed the IPU's work over the years and the important lessons collected from this work, such as:

- Quotas have been an important measure to facilitate women's access to parliament. The legal frameworks for such quotas must be ambitious, detailed and include implementation mechanisms.
- Electoral systems influence women's participation; proportional or mixed systems tend to favour women's access to parliament.
- Political parties remain gatekeepers to women's access to parliaments, as they determine candidacy, financial support and endorsements, among other things.
- Changing cultural norms among the electorate also assists women in presenting themselves as candidates and getting elected to parliament.
- Parliament needs to be a place where women feel comfortable and want to participate; as such, there is a need for gender-sensitive parliaments.
- Violence against women, such as electoral violence and harassment, hinders women's participation in parliaments.

Ms. Hilal invited participants to consider two questions: what are the remaining challenges to women's access to parliament, and what priorities should be addressed in the upcoming years?

Mr. J. Mendes Bota, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Portugal) began by stating that it is only natural that elected offices reflect society, with 50% of members being women and 50% men. However, he noted that glass ceilings still exist for women in Europe's political arena.

Mr. Bota said that while quotas may help, they are not sufficient; they need to be accompanied by innovative measures. For example, Mr. Bota suggested that as parties increase the number of women among their candidates, they should be provided with benefits, such as additional broadcasting time during elections.

In particular, Mr. Bota emphasized the importance of political parties in promoting women's participation. He proposed that parties should provide women candidates with mentoring, training, supporting structures, shared advertising time and a workplace with greater balance between work and family responsibilities. He encouraged women to get involved in politics by volunteering with political parties, particularly in the municipal field, and then working up to the leadership positions.

Ms. K. Ástgeirsdóttir, Director of the Center for Gender Equality (Iceland), was a member of the "Women's Party" in Iceland, a party aimed at increasing the representation of women in parliament. Ms. Ástgeirsdóttir indicated that there has been

a general increase in women's representation; last year women made up 43% of parliamentarians and the President was also a woman.

Ms. Ástgeirsdóttir spoke of the development and implementation of quotas in Iceland. In particular, she spoke of legislation passed in 2010 which established that companies with 50 employees or more must have no less than 40% of either gender on their corporate boards. Companies were given three years to implement the changes, and the Icelandic government published lists of qualified women with the necessary economic background and skill set.

While there was initial resistance in Iceland to changes promoting gender equality, Ms. Ástgeirsdóttir reported that now there is widespread acceptance of mechanisms, such as quotas. However, Ms. Ástgeirsdóttir said that the institution with the greatest resistance to such changes is the Icelandic parliament itself, where quotas do not apply to the legislature, to parliamentary bodies or to political parties.

Ms. Ástgeirsdóttir noted that Iceland will soon be celebrating 100 years of women's right to vote, and that this will be a great opportunity to review the progress of gender equality.

Ms. M. Semela, Development Director of the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), focused her comments on the power of the media and how it relates to women in decision-making positions. She said that three aspects of the media need to be examined:

- There should be greater gender equality in the newsroom. Ms. Semela noted that based on data in an IWMF global study, three quarters of the decision-making roles in the media are held by men.
- Greater personal security is needed to do be a journalist. Security is critical in particular for female journalists who can be the targets of gender-based harassment and violence.
- The ownership of the media should be examined, as only approximately 5% of venture capital goes to women who want to launch media outlets. If more women owned media outlets, it would allow women to control the story and tell it from their perspective.

Ms. Semela spoke of the challenges encountered by high-profile women who work in the media or are featured in the media. In particular, these women are often harassed online; cyberspace can enable the public shaming of a woman, and can hurt a woman's credibility and reputation.

Ms. Semela announced that IWMF will conduct another global report in 2015 on the progress of women in the media. In particular, the IWMF wants to see if there is an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions in the media.

Following these presentations, delegates participated in an open debate on the issue.

Ms. Susan Truppe, Member of Parliament, intervened during the debate to speak of the progress that has been made in Canada on women's representation in parliament. As an example, Ms. Truppe noted that 32% of current cabinet ministers are women. Ms. Truppe also detailed a number of ways by which parliamentarians could encourage women to participate in politics. Ms. Truppe spoke of the importance of mentorship, and provided as an illustration Status of Women Canada's funding to Ontario municipalities for political mentorship programs. In addition, Ms. Truppe indicated that women's associations or caucuses are important means to encourage women's full participation in politics, as these bodies serve as a forum to share ideas and as networking vehicles. Lastly, Ms. Truppe spoke of job shadowing which provides young women with insight into how the political arena functions. Ms. Truppe stated that the three main political parties in Canada are all very supportive of encouraging women's participation in politics.

Ms. H  l  ne LeBlanc, Member of Parliament, also intervened to speak of the role that political parties play in women's electoral success. She suggested that political parties must put women in ridings where they stand a chance of winning. Ms. LeBlanc said that women in decision-making positions should make a special effort to encourage other women to get involved. As an example, Ms. LeBlanc spoke of hosting young female students for a day, so that they could see her work on Parliament Hill. She stated that such mentoring can encourage young women to get involved in politics.

Session 2: The role of parliaments in implementation and accountability of the Millennium Development Goals

The theme for the second session was *The role of parliaments in implementation and accountability of the Millennium Development Goals*, which focused on how MDGs have framed national policy-making and the role played by parliaments in overseeing the implementation of MDGs from a gender perspective.

Ms. M.C. Perceval, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, emphasized the principle of common but differentiated responsibility in advancing the global development agenda; both developed and developing countries have different, yet critical, parts to play in advancing the agenda. As Ms. Perceval explained, all countries benefit from each other's advancement.

With respect to the work on the post-2015 development agenda, Ms. Perceval suggested that it is not possible to implement a single development model, as one must consider different social contexts and different economic options. However, she noted that all development models must acknowledge the equality and dignity of both men and women.

Ms. Perceval invited parliamentarians to consider the kind of world they would like, and then determine the developmental indicators required to measure progress towards that vision. She highlighted the need for democracy, recognition of diversity, and respect of human rights.

Ms. Perceval said that women suffer violence of a terrible nature and scope in conflict zones; she noted that war is waged on the bodies of women. This gender-based violence is a central reason why women must play an active role in working on of the upcoming post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Women must be empowered by the next development agenda; women's equality needs to be one of the goals, and gender equality must be mainstreamed in all other goals.

Mr. A Motter, Senior Advisor in the Economic and Social Affairs section of the IPU, examined the issue of the upcoming post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs. He asked how parliaments can ensure that the SDGs are implemented and mainstreamed through key processes, like the budget.

In his comments, Mr. Motter explained that the MDGs are focused on improving conditions for developing countries, but that the SDGs will be targeted at all countries of the world. The SDGs will add a higher level of complexity, linking environmental, economic and social issues. He spoke of how the development agenda in the past was generally divided into different silos: environmental, economic, educational, etc. Mr. Motter suggested that parliamentarians should recognize the complexity of the SDGs and ensure that the goals are considered in a more holistic, comprehensive manner.

Mr. Motter highlighted two IPU studies that had been conducted recently:

- a comparative study of several countries, including Italy, Indonesia and Nigeria, and their MDG implementation mechanisms; and
- a study of the MDG committee created in Nigeria, aimed at specifically monitoring the implementation and progress of MDGs in the country.

Based on the evidence from these studies, Mr. Motter suggested that a dedicated MDG monitoring structure does work in practice and can advance MDGs. As for the best form for that MDG structure, Mr. Motter said that it depends on the makeup of the parliament, the overall capacities (staff and resources), the rules, and the strengths of certain structures.

Mr. Motter spoke of two specific options for parliaments that want to establish a specific SDG structure in the future. Firstly, a caucus focused on SDGs would have the benefit of connecting a large network of parliamentarians, being less formal and having less "red tape" than some parliamentary structures, and having the ability to establish flexible

meeting times. A caucus can be very effective if it promotes open discussion and meets regularly. However, Mr. Motter also indicated that a caucus has weaknesses as it may have few resources, a limited voice, and little authority to demand action by government.

Mr. Motter said that a second parliamentary structure that could promote the SDGs is a specialized committee that examines implementation of SDGs, conducts progress reports, and liaises with other countries. While such committees take longer to establish, Mr. Motter said that they have the authority to hear from witnesses, have strong mandates, have financial support, and can conduct ongoing evaluations and monitoring of progress. However, Mr. Motter indicated that such committees are effective only if they have large membership and the participation of all parties. Another challenge is that such committees could marginalize the SDGs, not allowing such goals to be mainstreamed through all parliamentary structures and processes.

Following these presentations, delegates participated in an open debate on the issue.

Ms. Susan Truppe, Member of Parliament, spoke of Canada's commitments to the implementation of the MDGs through a number of major initiatives. She indicated that Canada had made significant financial contributions to reducing child mortality and improving maternal health at the international level. In addition, Ms. Truppe indicated that Canada had prioritized basic education in its international commitments, investing millions to help reach education goals in countries throughout Africa. Ms. Truppe told parliamentarians that Canada had contributed billions in international assistance and that Canada was continuing to meet its commitments to assistance. She said that Canada had focused its aid related to the MDGs on five priority themes: increasing food security, securing the future of children and youth, stimulating sustainable economic growth, advancing democratic governance, and ensuring security and stability.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc, Member of Parliament, spoke of the three key elements of the upcoming SDGs: the environment, the economy and society. She indicated her concern that the economy may take precedence over the environment and society. Ms. LeBlanc said that parliamentarians play an important role in ensuring that all three elements are considered during implementation of the SDGs. In addition, Ms. LeBlanc said that Canada had never established a committee specific to MDGs, but that the country should consider ways that civil society can be involved in the implementation and promotion of the SDGs, perhaps through the development of a royal commission on the subject.

In response to Ms LeBlanc's comments, Mr. Motter indicated that many developed countries, such as Canada, did not have MDG-specific structures because they saw the MDGs as applying only to developing countries. However, he indicated that the SDGs

will apply to all countries, and as such, a specific structure dedicated to these goals would be valuable.

Session 3: The place of gender equality in the next set of development goals

The theme for the third session was *The place of gender equality in the next set of development goals*, which focused on the opportunity to ensure that gender equality is central to the post-2015 development agenda, in particular mainstreamed through the SDGs.

Ms. B. Pomeranzi, Member of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee, spoke of the Committee's vision for the post-2015 development agenda. As the international body charged with overseeing CEDAW commitments, Ms. Pomeranzi said that the Committee is aware of the strong connection between development and women's rights. The near universal ratification of CEDAW highlights the importance of the supporting Committee's participation in the shaping of the post-2015 development agenda. Ms. Pomeranzi spoke of key elements that should be part of the new agenda: education, property rights, and instruments to address violence (such as the Istanbul convention).

Ms. Pomeranzi told parliamentarians that despite numerous advances in human rights, significant gaps remain in the complete application of such rights, particularly as it relates to the sexual and reproductive rights of women. In addition, Ms. Pomeranzi said that women have faced setbacks in the field of economic prosperity, in part because of the global financial crisis and also because of austerity measures implemented after the crisis. Ms. Pomeranzi recommended applying a gender lens to understand the specific impact that financial changes can have on women, compared to men.

As well, Ms. Pomeranzi proposed that parliaments be part of the development of the SDGs, and she suggested that one avenue for participation would be through the CEDAW Committee.

Ms. S. Palmieri, Policy Specialist at UN Women, discussed the role of gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda. Ms. Palmieri told parliamentarians that UN Women is a new entity created in 2010 that aims to provide gender-focused support to both member states and intergovernmental processes. She said that UN Women had been a part of consultations on the post-2015 development agenda.

Ms. Palmieri noted that UN-led global consultations with citizens indicated the need for greater gender equality in the upcoming development agenda. She said that UN Women would push for a two-pronged approach:

1. a universal goal on gender equality and women's empowerment; and
2. gender mainstreaming across all other goals, targets and indicators.

Ms. Palmieri suggested that progress in implementing the MDGs had been both uneven and limited, particularly with respect to goals related to women and gender equality. She explained that the next set of goals must focus more on the structural causes of gender inequality. Ms. Palmieri stated that the post-2015 development agenda presents an opportunity for transformation: it will provide countries with the chance to consider the lessons learned from the MDGs. She suggested that countries start to establish firm policy and resource commitments and develop accountability mechanisms for the upcoming goals.

According to Ms. Palmieri, UN Women wants the standalone development goal on gender equality and women's empowerment to include three target areas:

1. Freedom from violence for women and girls: such violence ranges from Female Genital Mutilation to harassment, and includes both the ending of such acts and a progressive shift in society's perception of this violence.
2. Gender equality in the distribution of capabilities: women should have equal access to knowledge, good health, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights of women and adolescent girls, as well as access to resources and opportunities, including land, decent work and equal pay to build women's economic and social security.
3. Gender equality in decision-making power in public and private institutions: this equality includes women's representation in national parliaments, on local councils, in the media, in civil society organizations, in management, on corporate boards and in families and communities.

Ms. Palmieri noted that implementation of such a standalone development goal would require improved data collection and robust monitoring of progress. Therefore, the post-2015 development agenda requires a focus on compiling statistics and sex-disaggregated data, and parliamentarians play a key role in ensuring the collection of such data.

Finally, Ms. Palmieri proposed that parliamentarians take the following steps to ensure the success of the upcoming SDGs, particularly those goals related to gender equality: build political will and momentum to deliver on the goals; foster national ownership of the goals; adapt the goals to the national context, and mobilize resources for and monitor implementation of the goals.

Following these presentations, delegates participated in an open debate on the issue.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc, Member of Parliament, intervened and spoke on the idea of development and its critical link to sustainability and the environment. In particular, she highlighted the challenges that emerge when economic development is at odds with sustainable development. Ms. LeBlanc suggested that all parliamentarians carefully consider the environmental costs of all development.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan, Senator,
Chair
Canadian Group of the
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	58th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
DESTINATION	New York, New York
DATES	March 11, 2014
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hélène LeBlanc, M.P. Susan Truppe, M.P.
STAFF	Laura Munn-Rivard, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 2,190.11
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 2,813.92
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$678.77
OFFICIAL GIFTS	
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	
TOTAL	\$ 5,682.80