

Canadian Group  
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien  
Union interparlementaire

## **Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the 115<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly and Related Meeting**

**Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**

**Geneva, Switzerland  
October 16 to 18, 2006**

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# Report

## 1. Background

The IPU is the international organization of Parliaments of sovereign states. It was established in 1889. The Union is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To this end, it:

- Fosters contacts, co-ordination, and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries;
- Considers questions of international interest and concern and expresses its views on such issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians;
- Contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights -- an essential factor 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.

The IPU supports the efforts of the United Nations, whose objectives it shares, and works in close cooperation with it. It also cooperates with regional inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals.

As of 16 October 2006, 148 national parliaments were members of the IPU and seven regional parliamentary assemblies were associate members. Most of these members are affiliated to one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Agenda for the 115th IPU Assembly

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on political issues. Twice a year it brings together parliamentarians to study international problems and make recommendations for action.

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<sup>1</sup> Source for this section: <http://www.ipu.org/english/whatipu.htm>.

The agenda for the 115<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland between 16 and 18 October 2006, addressed the following items:

- First Standing Committee: Cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations in promoting world peace, particularly from the perspectives of the fight against terrorism and the achievement of greater energy security;
- Second Standing Committee: [The role of parliaments in overseeing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular with regard to the problem of debt and the eradication of poverty and corruption](#);
- Third Standing Committee: [Missing persons](#); and
- Emergency Item: [The announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its nuclear weapons test and the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime](#).

A detailed report on the 115<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly and Related Meetings is available online.<sup>2</sup>

### **3. The Canadian Delegation**

Of the 1,165 delegates who attended the 115th IPU Assembly, 485 were members of national parliaments, of which 148 were women (30.5%) and three were Canadian parliamentarians. These included, from the Senate of Canada:

The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Leader of the delegation

The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, P.C.

The Honourable Mac Harb

### **4. Contributions made by the Canadian Delegation to the 115th IPU Assembly**

Canadian delegates were active and engaged participants in all Assembly and Standing Committee activities held during and in association with the 115<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/114/114.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Resolutions adopted by the Standing Committees that met on the occasion of the 114<sup>th</sup> Assembly may be found at: <http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/stcnfres.htm#114>.

**Senator Harb** attended the meeting of the First Standing Committee (Peace and International Security) during which the issue of “Cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations in promoting world peace, particularly from the perspectives of the fight against terrorism and the achievement of greater energy security” was debated.

**Senator Oliver** attended the meeting of the Second Standing Committee (Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade). During the debate on “[The role of parliaments in overseeing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular with regard to the problem of debt and the eradication of poverty and corruption](#)” he said:

... that Canada was committed to achieving the eight MDGs and their relevant targets by 2015. Under the Monterrey Consensus, Canada had proposed to support poorer countries through increased aid, liberalization and debt relief. The federal government had already increased its ODA. Under the MDG on debt relief, four of the most crucial attendant targets were jeopardized. Unfortunately, the WTO negotiations under the Doha Round had collapsed. Canada had developed "Connectivity Africa" programmes in partnership with the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA) to provide greater access to technology for developing countries in that region. In collaboration with pharmaceutical firms, it had undertaken to provide access to affordable essential drugs to those countries. It was the first country to pass legislation on the production of lower-cost versions of patented essential drugs for export to poor countries with no or limited manufacturing capacity. However, no such exports had yet occurred.

**Senator Harb** attended meetings of the Third Standing Committee (Democracy and Human Rights). During the debate on “Missing persons” he said:

... that by retaining the issue of missing persons on its agenda, the Inter-Parliamentary Union agenda would naturally assume a certain degree of responsibility for promoting the issue. In order to achieve that, the IPU should participate actively in international conferences, and sensitize other agencies and like-minded bodies on missing persons and related issues. He welcomed the recommendation made by co-Rapporteurs to establish national information bureaus for the collection and centralization of data on vulnerable persons, and said that such action would require the creation of an international database to verify the number of cases pending, and a regular reporting procedure to assess progress made in coordinating with international humanitarian bodies.

**Senator Harb** also served as chair and rapporteur for the Drafting Committee for the Third Standing Committee. As its chair, he presided over a daylong meeting on 17 October. As its rapporteur he made presentations to the Third Committee and to the Assembly on 18 October. When he addressed the Assembly, he said:

It is my pleasure to report to you this afternoon on the Meetings and the work of the Third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. Let me begin with the sincere expressions of gratitude that all members of the Standing Committee would like to extend to its co-rapporteurs, Mrs. Brigitta Gadiant (Switzerland) and Mr. Leonardo Nicolini (Uruguay) for having worked so hard to prepare what we all agreed was a comprehensive and sensible Report and Preliminary Draft Resolution.

To prepare the Final Resolution that you have before you today, the Standing Committee met on the morning of October 16, at which time our rapporteurs made their presentations and more than 45 delegates took the floor to make their views known on the issue of Missing Persons.

Following this considered debate, a Drafting Committee was struck with representatives from the six geopolitical groups, including Algeria, Benin, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Germany, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria and Switzerland.

The Drafting Committee met on the morning of October 17. At the request of the Drafting Committee I served as both its chair and rapporteur. This Committee had before it more than 70 proposed amendments which had been submitted prior to the statutory deadline. In the course of our work, we undertook a careful review of each and every proposed amendment, with a view to incorporating as many concepts and ideas that – in the view of the majority of delegates – would contribute to making the final resolution stronger. In many cases, we adopted proposed amendments as submitted. In other cases, we accepted sub-amendments to address other suggestions or to merge related concepts that had been proposed by more than one delegation. In certain instances, the spirit of a submitted amendment was found to be present elsewhere in the draft resolution and, upon debate, it was agreed that it did not need to be included.

This morning, our Standing Committee reconvened, whereupon we considered the very same version of the resolution that you have before you this afternoon. During this morning's deliberations more than 20 delegates made interventions, including delegates from India and Iran who made comments and expressed reservations concerning certain elements of the draft resolution.

Let me reassure these distinguished delegates that these reservations were properly recorded and will be reflected in the minutes of this morning's meeting. In the final analysis, the resolution before you here today - which was adopted unanimously by our Committee this morning - reflects the hard work of our distinguished co-rapporteurs, the many speeches that were delivered in Committee, as well as the many proposed amendments that were considered by the Drafting Committee and the main Committee.

The issue of missing persons is a very important matter that should preoccupy us all. While we recognize the excellent work of some countries in addressing this issue, we encourage other countries to address this concern with greater urgency. In particular, it is our hope that these countries will afford these persons proper humane treatment in accordance with international guidelines, such as those established by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as well as other like-minded organizations.

Mr. President, on behalf of the Third Standing Committee, allow me to thank our distinguished Committee Chair, Mr. Jay Kun Yoo, the many delegates who expressed their views in Committee, as well as the members of the Drafting Committee for their determined efforts and diligence. I would also like to thank the team from the IPU Secretariat, the representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross and, again, the co-rapporteurs for their commitment to this important process.

We have before us today a resolution on Missing Persons, which, in the main, reflects the spirit of nearly all proposals submitted. It is therefore my sincere hope that this Assembly can agree here today to adopt this resolution unanimously.

## **5. Participation by Canadians in Related Meetings and Activities**

Concurrent with Standing Committee activities associated with the 115<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly were the meetings of several related committees and working groups. This section identifies those meetings that were attended by Canadian delegates. In instances where key activities are not reported in the IPU's official report on the 114<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, further details are provided below.

### **(a) The IPU Governing Council**

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. A number of committees and working groups are subordinated to it and report to the Council on their work. All members of the Canadian delegation attended at least one of the two meetings of the Governing Council that were held on 16 and 18 October.

### **(b) The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians**

In 1976, the IPU adopted a "Procedure for the examination and treatment of communications concerning violations of the human rights of parliamentarians," applicable to parliamentarians who are, or have been, subjected to arbitrary actions (e.g. State harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, unfair trial, violation of

parliamentary immunity) during the exercise of their mandate, whether the Parliament is sitting, in recess or has been dissolved by unconstitutional or extraordinary measures.

The IPU's Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, is comprised of five parliamentarians representing different regions of the world and is responsible for the treatment of such complaints. The Committee holds hearings and undertakes onsite missions. If it does not prove possible to reach a satisfactory settlement of the case during a first phase of confidential examination and communication with the authorities of the countries concerned, public reports and recommendations for specific measures are submitted by the Committee to the Governing Council and thus are made public.

**Senator Carstairs** was elected to this committee as a substitute member in April 2004. In May 2006, she was elected to the committee as a titular member for a five year term, ending April 2011. The Committee meets four times a year, including on the occasion of the IPU's statutory Assemblies.

The Committee met from 14 to 17 October.<sup>4</sup> It conducted 9 hearings with delegations from countries where it had cases pending and, in total, examined 64 cases in 32 countries, including including 31 public cases affecting individuals from the following jurisdictions: Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, Eritrea, Honduras, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Palestine / Israel, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

On 17 October, a special panel discussion was held to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The panel included Mr. F.M. Dilon (Philippines) (President of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), **Senator Carstairs** (Canada) (Vice-President of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, Mr. P. Cornillon (Honorary Secretary General of the IPU), Mr. H. Solari Yrigoyen (Member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee and former President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians) and Mr. A. Conde (Guinea), and Mrs. A. Clwyd (United Kingdom) (Former President of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians). In her presentation to the group **Senator Carstairs** said:

... that the Committee had five members, representing the geopolitical groups of the IPU: there were two members from the Twelve Plus Group, one from the Asia-Pacific Group, one from the Africa Group and one from the Latin America and Caribbean Group. It had been suggested that membership should be increased by two, in order to add a further member from Africa, and one seat that

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<sup>4</sup> The resolutions of public cases adopted by this committee may be found at: <http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/hr-cases.htm>.



would be shared between the Arab countries not represented in the Africa Group, and the Eastern European countries. Each member also had a substitute, who should be present at all Committee meetings, and must have a detailed knowledge of the cases before the Committee, in order to ensure a smooth transition if they were ever required to replace a titular member. The Committee met four times a year, and had an average workload that spanned 30 to 35 countries, each with between one and five cases.

The Committee received communications from parliamentarians themselves, or from other concerned parliamentarians or non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, if the victim was missing, in prison or had been murdered. All communications must meet admissibility requirements before they were considered by the Committee: they must concern a parliamentarian, and information must be received from both parties to the dispute. The Committee would request information from the State, which would be examined and crosschecked, and efforts would be made to dialogue as much as possible with the State, in a spirit of cooperation. Cases were divided into two categories: private and public. Private cases were kept strictly confidential if the Committee felt that genuine progress was being made with the State to resolve the issue. If those cases were resolved, they would never become public. Public cases often concerned serious violations, such as the murder of a parliamentarian. If the Committee felt that there had not been sufficient engagement by the State to cooperate and resolve the case, the case would be made public. Cases could become private again, after having been made public, should the Committee consider it necessary.

The Committee conducted country visits, only if the government and the parliamentarian concerned were providing conflicting information. Such visits were only conducted with the consent of the State. The majority of States agreed to such visits, since they wanted the Committee to have a clear view of the situation under investigation. Sometimes, those visits resulted in the closure of the case. The Committee was committed to working to promote the human rights of parliamentarians, as a result of its enormous respect for parliamentarians all over the world.

### **(c) Geopolitical Group Meetings**

Article 25 of the Statutes and Rules of the Inter-Parliamentary Union permits members of the IPU to form geopolitical groups. These groups play an important role in the functioning and activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

There are six geopolitical groups formally recognized by the IPU: the African Group (40 members), the Asia-Pacific Group (26 members), the Arab Group (14

members), the Eurasia Group (9 members), the Latin American Group (19 members) and the Twelve Plus Group (43 members). Each group decides on working methods that best suit its participation in the activities of the Union and informs the Secretariat of its composition, the names of its officers, and its rules of procedure.

Canada belongs to the Asia Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group. Since Canada belongs to more than one geopolitical group, it submits candidatures for vacant positions within the Union through the Twelve Plus Group.<sup>5</sup>

A meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group was held on 15 October. **Senator Oliver** and **Senator Harb** attended this meeting.

Meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were held on 15, 17 and 18 October. All Canadian delegates attended at least one meeting of the Twelve Plus Group. Agenda items considered included:

- Report from Group representatives on the work of the Executive Committee
- Evaluation of IPU reform
- Emergency item
- Reports and draft resolutions of Standing Committees
- Appointments to drafting committees
- Positions to be filled
- Proposed themes and rapporteurs for the 117<sup>th</sup> Assembly (fall 2007)
- Presidency of the Twelve Plus Group
- Review of Twelve Plus Group Rules
- Financial matters
- Schedule of Group meetings for the 116<sup>th</sup> Assembly (April-May 2007)

The most important decision of consequence to the Canadian IPU delegation occurred on 16 October, when Canada (represented by **Senator Harb**) was nominated to serve on the drafting committee for the Third Standing Committee studying “Missing Persons.”

## 6. Follow-up

The IPU is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. In recent years the Union has solidified its role as the lead organization

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<sup>5</sup> Minutes of the meetings of the Asia Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group are available from the Canadian IPU Secretariat upon request.

though which parliamentarians may promote and debate issues of global importance to civil society and has significantly strengthened its working relationship with the United Nations.

The 114<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly and Related Meetings was a constructive exercise, during which its participants were able to focus on and debate issues of importance to the structure, functioning and composition of the IPU. It was also an occasion during which resolutions addressing important social, cultural and economic issues were debated and adopted.

Following each statutory IPU Assembly the Canadian IPU Group prepares this report, which is tabled in the House of Commons and the Senate. It also forwards relevant IPU reports and resolutions to parliamentary committees and government departments and sends letters to Ottawa-based diplomatic missions concerning the IPU's report and recommendations on the human rights violations of former or serving parliamentarians.

The 116<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly and Related Meetings, to be held in Bali, Indonesia from 28 April to 2 May 2007, will address the following agenda items:

- Ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world
- Job creation and employment security in the era of globalization
- Promoting diversity and equal rights for all through universal democratic and electoral standards

The Canadian IPU Group's preparations are already well under way for these Assembly meetings. The Canadian Group is committed to the objectives and principles of the IPU and looks forward to its active participation in these and other future meetings of the IPU.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Senator  
President, Canadian IPU Group

## **Travel Costs**

**ASSOCIATION**

Canadian Group of the  
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	115 <sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly and Related Meetings
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Geneva, Switzerland
<b>DATES</b>	October 16-18, 2007
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, P.C. The Honourable Mac Harb
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$ 18,850.81</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$ 6,704.40</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$ 3,462.45</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$ 35.57</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$ 878.50</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 29,931.73</b>