

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the 264th Session of
the IPU Executive Committee**

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**Geneva, Switzerland
August 29-30, 2012**

Report

1. Introduction¹

In accordance with the Statutes² of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), a 17-member body of parliamentarians oversees the administration of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and provides advice to its Governing Council³.

The Executive Committee advises the Council on matters relating to affiliation and reaffiliation to the Union fixes the date and place of Council sessions and establishes their provisional agenda. It also proposes to the Council the annual work program and budget of the IPU. The Executive Committee controls the administration of the Secretariat as well its activities in the execution of the decisions taken by the Assembly and the Council.⁴

Fifteen members of the Executive Committee are elected by the Council for a four-year term. The President of the IPU is an ex officio member and President of the Committee. The President of the Co-ordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians is an ex officio member of the Executive Committee for a two-year term which can be renewed once. Not less than 12 members of the Executive Committee are elected from among members of the Governing Council and at least three members must be women.

In October 2010, the Honourable **Donald H. Oliver**, Q.C, from the Senate of Canada, was elected to a four year term to serve on the IPU Executive as a representative of the Twelve Plus Group, a geopolitical association of European and like minded nations.⁵

2. Agenda of the 264th Session of the IPU Executive Committee

The IPU Executive Committee holds sessions twice a year prior to its spring and fall Assemblies and, exceptionally, will hold a third session between assemblies to address matters of high priority. This was the case for the 264th Session of the Executive Committee, held from 29-30 August 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland. The annotated agenda for this meeting is attached as Appendix 1.

3. Results of the 264th Session of the IPU Executive Committee

Meetings of the IPU Executive Committee are held *in camera*. A Summary Record is attached as Appendix 2.

During the Committee's consideration of other business, Senator Oliver made the following statement:

Mr. President, Colleagues,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to provide you with an update about the Assembly in Quebec City.

¹ Source for this section: www.ipu.org/strct-e/excom.htm.

² See www.ipu.org/strct-e/statutes-new.htm.

³ See www.ipu.org/strct-e/cnlpres.htm for details on the Governing Council.

⁴ The Executive Committee works in accordance with its Rules. See www.ipu.org/strct-e/exrules-new.htm.

⁵ See www.ipu.org/strct-e/geopol.htm for the full list of Twelve Plus Group members.

We have an outstanding team that has been hard at work on this project for the past several months.

Canada is very honoured to host the 127th Assembly, for the fourth time in our history. This will be the first time since 1985.

In 2012, we are also celebrating the 100th anniversary of the formal affiliation between Canada and the IPU. To mark the occasion, during the Assembly in Quebec City we will be distributing a commemorative booklet that looks back over the 100-year-old partnership between Canada and the IPU.

IPU assemblies generally welcome more than 3,000 delegates and observers from around the world; the Assembly in October will be no different. It will be the largest conference in Canadian history. To date, over 1,000 hotel rooms have been booked and close to 60 countries and 7 organizations with observer status have been registered. At last count, 425 delegates have made use of our state-of-the-art online registration system. In some cases, we have also worked closely with delegations less familiar with new technologies in order to facilitate the process.

The Assembly's overall theme will address: Citizenship, identity, and linguistic and cultural diversity in a globalized world. This past June, a Draft Declaration on this topic was circulated to the full IPU membership. This Declaration was developed by the Canadian Group, in collaboration with our colleague Dr. Assegaf of Indonesia, who will serve as my co-rapporteur when we present this document at the outset of the Special Debate in Quebec City.

To date, we have received excellent feedback on the Draft Declaration. A revised version will soon be circulated for further feedback from IPU members. In Quebec City, additional input will be received via the Special Debate during which we will have high profile keynote speakers with expertise on elements of our theme to open each sitting. Upon the conclusion of the Special Debate, a drafting committee will meet to prepare a final Declaration for adoption by the Assembly during its closing session.

The statutory activities of the second annual Assembly will include, as usual, meetings of the Governing Council, meetings of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs, and panel sessions that will address the topics to be studied by the Standing Committees in Quito next year. In addition to this, several special sessions have been developed in collaboration with the IPU Secretariat.

Perhaps most notable among these will be a Special Session that has been developed by the Gender Partnership Group. The objective of this activity is to consider, and adopt a Plan of Action on Gender-sensitive parliaments through plenary discussions and breakout groups. This Plan is envisioned as a tool to support parliaments in their efforts to become more gender-sensitive. Such a Plan responds to the needs of both men and women in its structures, operations,

methods and work. As such, we are requesting that all delegations send male and female delegates to these Gender Partnership meetings.

We are also planning panel sessions on topical issues including:

- Building peace after conflict
- Creating opportunities for youth in today's global economy
- Peak oil and the prospects for energy security, and
- Multilateralism and the role of parliamentary diplomacy

Much work has been invested by the Canadian planning team to identify high-level panelists for these sessions. I'm pleased to report that we have secured a wide and dynamic range of panelists and moderators from all walks of life and regions, with representatives from international institutions, parliaments, and the private sector. We are aiming to have dynamic formats for these sessions that will encourage dialogue and preclude the presentation of prepared speeches.

Lastly, I would like to bring to your attention the important work that is being done to host a special day-long meeting on Parliamentary representation and communication, and the role of social media. This major event is being organized by the IPU in collaboration with the ASGP, the IFLA section on Parliamentary Libraries and Research Services, and the Global Centre for ICT. It is targeted at parliamentarians; Secretaries General; and parliamentary staff involved in social media. It will be held on the final day of the Assembly. We strongly encourage all delegations to send MPs and parliamentary personnel to this day-long event.

The dynamic program that we have developed for the 127th IPU Assembly will be enhanced by the cutting-edge technology of the Québec City Convention Centre, a state of the art facility recognized internationally for its reputation and expertise in hosting green events.

In addition to our work program, there will be an exciting series of cultural experiences, meals and events, including a special event hosted by our Speakers for the diplomatic corps and Heads of delegations on October 25 at the historic Citadel fortress, a world heritage site. Additional activities, including a special performance of the world renowned Cirque du Soleil following the opening ceremony, will showcase Canada's diverse cultural heritage as well as the francophone character of our country. These special events will give IPU delegates a true sense of the "Canadian experience."

The 127th IPU Assembly also affords the Parliament of Canada an opportunity to uphold its commitment to the promotion of responsible environmental stewardship and to showcase Canadian technology through innovative ways of delivering the Assembly. I have no doubt that the outcomes of this five day event will raise the bar for future IPU meetings, thereby ensuring the legacy of our efforts in Quebec City.

Colleagues, it is now less than two months until the opening of the 127th Assembly in Quebec City. We are extremely proud and excited to be hosting this major event. We very much look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you.

Merci.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator
President, Canadian Group of the IPU

Appendix 1



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

CHEMIN DU POMMIER 5
1218 LE GRAND-SACONNEX / GENEVA (SWITZERLAND)

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EX/264/A.1
12 July 2012

264th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Geneva, 29-30 August 2012

Provisional annotated agenda

1. **Adoption of the agenda**
2. **Financial questions**
 - (a) **Draft programme and budget 2013**
The Executive Committee will examine a first draft of the programme and budget. The Sub-Committee on Finance will report on its discussions in this regard.
 - (b) **Mobilization of voluntary funding for IPU activities**
The Secretary General and the Sub-committee on Finance will report on the situation of voluntary funding.
3. **Implementation of the IPU Strategy 2012-2017**
The Executive Committee will revert to the issue of implementation of the IPU Strategy. In particular, it will re-examine the document submitted at its session in Kampala in regard to improving the functioning of the IPU Assembly and its subsidiary organs (EX/263/9(a)-P.1).
4. **IPU communications strategy**
The Executive Committee will be informed of progress in implementing the communications strategy and will have an initial discussion about the IPU's visual identity.
5. **Parliamentary capacity building**
The Committee will be updated on IPU efforts to build capacity in parliament. It will receive a recent external evaluation of its technical assistance activities. It will also have an opportunity to discuss support from the international community to parliaments.
6. **Questions relating to IPU membership**
The Committee will review developments in the situation of a number of member parliaments.

7. Any other business

The Committee is invited to comment on a proposal of the Arab Parliament to hold a conference at IPU Headquarters on the case of detained Palestinian parliamentarians.

Appendix 2



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

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EX/264/SR.1
1 October 2012

SUMMARY RECORD
of the
264th extraordinary session of the
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
29-30 August 2012
IPU Headquarters, Geneva

Participation

President: Mr. A. Radi (Morocco)

Members and substitutes: Ms. A. Kaboré Koala (Burkina Faso), Mr. Nhem Thavy (Cambodia), Mr. D. Oliver (Canada), Ms. S. Moulengui-Mouélé (Gabon), Mr. J. Winkler (Germany), Ms. N. Ali Assegaf (Indonesia, President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians), Mr. M.A.M. Al-Ghanim (Kuwait), Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden), Mr. P.-F. Veillon (Switzerland), Ms. R. Kadaga (Uganda) and Ms. I. Passada (Uruguay).

Mr. M. Vardanyan (Armenia) was no longer a member of parliament and his replacement was not able to attend. Ms. N. Motsamai (Lesotho), Mr. A. Alonso Díaz-Caneja (Mexico), Mr. F. Kundi (Pakistan) and Mr. F. Drilon (Philippines) were absent.

Secretariat of the IPU: Mr. A.B. Johnsson, Secretary General, and Ms. J. Toedtli, Secretary of the Executive Committee.

AGENDA

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 29 August.

Item 1 of the agenda

Adoption of the agenda

(EX/264/A.1)

Mr. Oliver asked whether an extra item could be added to the agenda as item 8 - Overview of preparations for the Quebec Assembly.

It was so decided.

The agenda was amended and adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

Financial questions

**(a) Draft programme and budget 2013
(EX/265/6(b)-P.1)**

Mr. Örnfjäder, in his capacity as Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, said that the purpose of creating the Sub-Committee on Finance almost one year previously had been to involve the members of the Executive Committee more in the work of preparing the budget. The process for the 2013 budget had begun in Kampala, where the Sub-Committee had examined the IPU Strategy and provided some guidance to the Secretariat, insisting on zero increase in Members' contributions. The six geopolitical groups had given feedback on their priorities. The Sub-Committee had met twice since: once on 14 and 15 May and again on 28 June. The reports of both meetings had been distributed. The previous day, the Sub-Committee had reviewed the draft budget in detail and the report of that meeting was also available. Based on that review, it would be recommending the 2013 budget to the Governing Council for adoption at the Quebec Assembly.

Ms. Lorber-Willis, Director of the Division of Support Services, gave a brief overview of the 2013 budget. In keeping with the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Finance, the draft budget was balanced and there was zero increase in

Members' assessed contributions. The decision had been taken to freeze reserves in order to achieve that result and use the expected operating surplus of CHF 100,000 to supplement 2013 income. The situation regarding the payment of income tax to the French authorities by some staff members residing in France remained unchanged but the Organization's liability would decrease over time as new staff members would not be entitled to compensation.

Additional funding would have to be sought for the 2014 conference on indigenous peoples and the Speakers' Conference in 2015. The presentation of the budget had been simplified, with a detailed logframe included as an annex.

Mr. Veillon thanked the Secretariat for the detailed documents placed at their disposal. While it was normal to have a balanced budget he felt that it was unacceptable to use the operating surplus to that end. That was tantamount to dipping into their capital. It was important to sustain cost-saving measures over time. He asked how it was possible that the costs of two Assemblies abroad (Kampala and Quebec) in 2012 were lower than the projected costs of one Assembly abroad (Quito) and one in Geneva in 2013.

The Secretary General explained that, on the one hand, the costs of the Kampala Assembly were lower than those of the Quito Assembly because of the travel component. Shorter distances meant less expensive airline tickets for staff. On the other hand, the Canadian hosts would be covering certain costs, including security, room services and locally-recruited interpreters for the Quebec Assembly, which the IPU would have to cover in Geneva in 2013.

Mr. Veillon said that he did not agree with displacing CHF 100,000 from the Working Capital Fund to the regular budget and asked to have the amount removed.

The Secretary General recalled that that issue had been debated at length and no other alternative had been found. As one post within the Secretariat would not be replaced, the salary and budget of that post would not only generate savings but would certainly also generate a surplus in excess of CHF 100,000. He assured the members that the IPU's reserves would not be left empty.

Mr. Örnfjäder stated that the purpose of the 2013 budget was to service the Organization's core work. Savings could not be made simply for the sake of savings. Reductions or deductions had to be made in certain areas.

Mr. Oliver considered that the point was moot if projections placed the operating surplus at the end of 2012 well beyond the CHF 100,000 mark. Canada currently had an operating deficit of CAD \$ 30 billion but the government expected to have a balanced budget within one year by cutting programmes, budgets and posts.

Mr. Örnfjäder admitted that they were not wizards and had done their best to produce a balanced budget. He was well aware of the concerns expressed but members should look beyond the figures and consider the impact of certain decisions on the budget.

Mr. Oliver asked the Secretary General how the outcome of the US presidential elections in November would affect the IPU. If the US Congress rejoined the IPU its contributions would no doubt inject significant sums into the Organization's coffers.

The Secretary General indicated that if the Democrats won and regained the majority in Congress, he had received assurances that they would make it a priority for the US Congress to reaffiliate to the IPU. The opposite scenario would obviously defer that decision for some years.

Mr. Veillon argued that while he understood the reasons behind the move, having a financial background himself, he felt that it was unacceptable to use the Working Capital Fund to balance the budget even if there would be a surplus at the end of the year. It was an artificial measure and he insisted on putting the matter to a vote.

The President invited the members to vote by show of hands on Mr. Veillon's proposal.

Two members voted for and seven members against.

The motion was not carried.

Mr. Veillon asked the Secretary General if he was certain to obtain CHF 1.5 million in voluntary funding as per projections.

The Secretary General assured Mr. Veillon that the IPU would receive significantly more than that amount. He would know for sure by the following Monday but had good reason to believe that USAID would increase its contributions and the Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida) had already pledged more than had been expected.

On the matter of French taxes, the member from Switzerland had informed him that a bill was currently before the French Senate on exonerating staff of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) from paying taxes to the French authorities. However, he added that the fundamental difference between the IOM and the IPU was that the former was based on a treaty and was thus recognized as an international organization. That was not the case of the IPU. The Secretariat was in discussions with the French authorities and would try to find an arrangement to resolve that matter.

Mr. Veillon referred to page 9 of the budget document and enquired why no figures were indicated in the first line under Objective 2 – Advancement of gender equality.

The Secretary General explained that the first line corresponded to staff positions and as responsibilities under the various Objectives were distributed among several staff members, it was difficult to reflect that situation in fractions and figures.

Mr. Nhem Thavy referred to page 10 of the budget and noted that the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians would be reducing the number of meetings it held but recruiting one additional staff member. Was that not a contradiction? Should it not drop some cases in order cut costs?

The Secretary General indicated that the Human Rights Committee had held a long discussion earlier in the year about how to improve its working methods and become more efficient. Based on those discussions, it had decided to reduce the number of sessions it held annually from four to three but be more proactive and conduct more field visits. It was felt that a hands-on approach would be more beneficial. Thus, it had not been able to identify any savings. It was merely shifting expenses from one area to another. Traditionally, the Human Rights Programme had been serviced by four staff – a Programme Manager, a Programme Officer and two administrative assistants. However, its workload had expanded over the years to include inter alia awareness-raising of human rights issues in parliaments. It was thus felt that one additional staffer was needed to allow the Committee to fulfil its mandate and voluntary funds would be sought to that end.

Mr. Oliver considered that the Human Rights Committee did laudable work and its activities should not be cut but rather streamlined and enhanced. Its work went to the heart of what the IPU did best. He asked about the training and awareness-raising components of the budget.

The Secretary General explained that the Committee organized information seminars and events in the wings of IPU Assemblies and was pursuing work on the Universal Periodic Review, children's rights and international humanitarian law. In late 2012, it would be organizing an event on birth registration. A small amount of its budget came from core funding and a larger amount from voluntary funding.

Mr. Winkler asked whether the entire Committee would be travelling to conduct on-site missions and if the conference proposed by the Arab Parliament on detained Palestinian members of parliament was included in the Committee's budget for the following year.

Ms. Kadaga admitted that she would be reluctant to touch the Committee's budget. It should be left intact.

The Secretary General indicated that the Committee already conducted on-site missions generally consisting of one senior IPU staff member and one Committee member. It also sent trial observers to hearings involving members of parliament to ensure that fair-trial guarantees were met and to obtain first-hand information. He agreed that the Committee should continue to do that and more and encourage its members to assume greater ownership by following up events and cases in their respective regions. Its member from GRULAC would be travelling to Colombia and to the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C. to do just that.

Mr. Winkler endorsed Ms. Kadaga's remarks.

Ms. Kaboré Koala considered that on-site missions should be promoted as they had a greater impact on the ground and, as a counterweight, the Committee sessions should be reduced by one.

Mr. Veillon echoed the sentiments expressed by previous speakers. The Committee did sterling work and its budget should not be reduced. However, referring to Objective 4.2 of the Strategy on page 12 of the budget, he questioned the link between the IPU and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In his view, WTO-related activities were not a priority for the Organization in times of financial hardship. The amount allocated to such activities – CHF 103,000 – should be removed. He proposed to put the matter to a vote.

Mr. Oliver argued that the WTO was essential for many reasons, not least for its dispute settlement mechanism. The Director-General of the WTO had stated in no uncertain terms that he wished to create a parliamentary dimension to the trade organization so that not just ministers but legislators could oversee the world's trade architecture. He had attended a number of WTO-related meetings on behalf of the IPU and had found that the WTO appreciated and valued the IPU's contribution. Indeed, he felt that the IPU should pursue its work in that area to strengthen itself as an organization. He believed that the CHF 103,000 allocated to that area would be money well-spent.

Ms. Passada considered that a cut in WTO-related activities was not justified. Members of parliament had been sidelined for too long from trade negotiations and their involvement was important.

Mr. Örnfjäder admitted that the first item where he would propose to cut expenditure was WTO-related activities. But if the amount was removed from that budget heading, what would it be used for alternatively? What would be the justification for making such a cut? Would the money be better spent in another area?

Mr. Winkler requested the Secretariat to produce a report on the outcome of WTO-related activities.

Ms. Ali Assegaf felt that if another area could not be identified where the money would be better spent, it should be retained under the original budget heading.

The Secretary General said that a report on WTO-related activities would be drawn up for the next session of the Executive Committee. He reminded the members of the genesis of that activity. In 1999, the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle, USA, had given rise to civil unrest and general discontent. People had felt that the WTO was not held to account, lacked transparency and thus was not a legitimate organization. The IPU had approached the WTO in a bid to bring a parliamentary dimension to the organization and enhance its transparency. The IPU had had to convince WTO Members to open up to parliaments and the European Parliament (EP) to work with it. In 2002, the IPU had held its first Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, organized jointly with the EP. Those meetings had brought an element of information-sharing and

accountability to the WTO, to the extent that the WTO Director-General currently fielded questions from parliamentarians about sensitive trade issues. It was also the first activity within the IPU to enjoy a certain level of specialization, since parliamentarians versed in trade issues or sitting on trade committees in their own parliament were invited to participate. He would be reluctant to cut that activity.

Mr. Veillon stated that while he understood the arguments raised, WTO-related activities were not part of the IPU's core business. Not in times of financial austerity anyway. The IPU needed to set itself priorities and the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance had even admitted that he would make cuts under that area first. He proposed to put the matter to a vote.

The President invited the members to vote by show of hands on Mr. Veillon's proposal.

One member voted for, one member abstained and seven members voted against.

The motion was not carried.

The President asked about the rationale for producing the summary records of the General Debate only in one language and four to five weeks after the Assembly rather than on-the-spot.

The Secretary General explained that back in the 1920s, speakers could take the floor in English, French, German or Italian and the report would be produced in their respective language. A decision had been taken many years later to produce the summary record in French and English only within 24 hours of the debate. When asked by the Sub-Committee on Finance to identify possible cost-savings, the Secretariat had felt that currently it was not worth paying airfare and per diem for précis-writers to travel to Assemblies to produce the records on-the-spot. That could be done once back in Geneva since very few delegates actually read the summary record on-site. He assured members, however, that the summary record would be produced in its entirety in English or French.

Mr. Örnfjäder added that they needed to identify cost-savings and some activities or areas cost more than others. Members should also examine the format and length of future Assemblies in order to make savings.

Ms. Ali Assegaf said that she had experienced difficulties in communicating within and among the geopolitical groups and on a smaller scale, within the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians. The e-mail list she had received was not updated and it was crucial for members to remain in contact. Therefore, she felt that improving communications at all levels was essential for the Organization.

Mr. Nhem Thavy observed that lots of money was being spent on developing the IPU website. He felt that as a countermeasure, efforts should be made to reduce the

costs of producing and shipping publications and that dedicated staff should be assigned to update mailing lists.

Mr. Veillon requested a breakdown of expenses for the two annual assemblies under Objective 7.2 on page 16 of the budget document.

Ms. Ali Assegaf enquired why there was no costing for producing guidelines on achieving gender and political balance in delegations. Was that not a priority for the IPU?

The Secretary General explained that funds had been allocated for the production of such guidelines in 2013 under Objective 9. The Secretariat was deliberately taking a step-by-step approach to the issue.

Mr. Oliver requested a breakdown of the priorities and costs under the communications budget. He asked what had been done to follow up on the Saatchi & Saatchi report that had been issued some years previously. He admitted that people often asked him what the IPU did, so he agreed entirely that outreach was crucial.

The Secretary General explained that the report referred to by Mr. Oliver underpinned the new communications strategy. Greater efforts were being made to communicate better with Members, notably through the website, and to make contacts between Members and the Secretariat more fluid. The IPU was mid-way through implementing the new communications strategy. It would be implementing a more effective publications policy, making a number of publications available online and asking Members to pay for shipping costs in full or in part. He admitted that the IPU was little-known by its own Members, not to mention the wider public. The Organization had hired communications experts to develop effective tools under the guidance of the Director of Communications. Ultimately, a more modern IPU would attract more donors and greater funding. He informed the members that a more in-depth presentation on the IPU communications strategy would be made later under Item 4 of the agenda.

Ms. Passada agreed that the IPU needed to be more visible and more present in parliaments. On her own parliament's website there was no mention of or link to the IPU. Change needed to start within the Organization and eventually radiate outwards. The geopolitical groups must take ownership of the IPU and improve contacts within and among the groups and with the IPU Secretariat. It was important to know how and what to communicate.

Mr. Oliver referred to priority no. 5 under Objective 8 – Enhanced IPU visibility – on page 16 of the budget document. He asked what “building and maintaining new media outreach” meant.

Mr. Veillon noted that the IPU levied an internal assessment on its staff and at the same time applied the UN salary scale. How was it possible to reconcile both systems?

The Secretary General stated that the IPU had always had its own Staff Rules. As of 2005, the Organization had decided to align itself with the UN salary scale so that it could be part of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF). The difference between both systems was not enormous. However, the IPU contracted its own health and accident insurance for its staff, hence the dual regime. In addition, eight former staff members were part of a bridge pension scheme to compensate for the two-year gap in retirement age from 60 to 62 years. As the IPU had to negotiate insurance for 40 staff as opposed to the United Nations, whose staff was close to 100,000, it did not have the same bargaining power.

Ms. Kadaga asked why no provision had been made for staff and salaries under Objective 6 – Improved parliamentary contribution to peace-building and conflict prevention – on page 14 of the budget document. It was her understanding that parliaments were being called upon to play a greater role in those areas.

The Secretary General explained that the IPU had never had a dedicated officer for peace-building per se. Those functions had traditionally been distributed among himself, the Director of Programmes and other members of staff.

Mr. Örnfjäder suggested that the Executive Committee recommend the draft 2013 budget to the Governing Council for adoption with two minor modifications: the title should read simply “Implementing the IPU Strategy on a tight budget” and a breakdown of expenses for the two annual Assemblies would be provided.

Ms. Ali Assegaf seconded the motion.

Mr. Veillon indicated that he wished to abstain since he disagreed on two fundamental points: use of the Working Capital Fund to balance the budget and the allocation made to WTO-related activities. He proposed that the budget be put to a vote.

The President invited the members to vote on recommending the budget.

Eight members voted for, none voted against and one member abstained.

The motion was not carried.

The Executive Committee decided to recommend the 2013 draft budget as amended to the Governing Council.

Item 2 of the agenda

Financial questions

(b) Mobilization of voluntary funding for IPU activities

The Secretary General indicated that when the IPU approached donors, it expressed its preference for institutional rather than earmarked funding. That way, the Members could decide how to spend the funds. Currently, Sida provided such funding. It also provided multi-year funding, having recently concluded a three-year arrangement with the IPU. At a minimum, the IPU requested funding for programmes, which Irish Aid provided for the Gender Partnership Programme. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) used to provide such support but had recently been restructured and the IPU was left without any obvious counterpart in the Agency. The IPU was confident it would receive a positive response to its request for funding.

The IPU had recently enjoyed robust support in the area of development, particularly maternal, newborn and child health. It had received support or offers of support from the World Health Organization, World Vision and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and was in discussions with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It also received support from USAID (US\$ 200,000 for 2013), UNDP (capacity-building in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea-Bissau), UNAIDS and UNICEF. The Sub-Committee on Finance had held lengthy discussions on how to attract more donors and obtain additional funding. Contacts were being pursued with Australia and New Zealand to that end.

Some parliaments were willing to act as an intermediary between the IPU and their country's development agencies, such as those of India, Finland and Turkey. The French and Austrian parliaments were following suit. He appealed to the members to become more involved in fund-raising activities by heightening awareness of the IPU's work among the donor community.

The importance of a sound legislative framework in promoting good governance had been recognized far and wide and aid effectiveness work was being spearheaded by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It was important for parliaments in both donor and recipient countries to be aware of aid received and more importantly, how it was being spent, hence the need for parliamentary oversight. At an OECD meeting the previous month, the IPU and other stakeholders had been applauded for their good work in drawing up guidelines and recommendations. Such meetings – attended by government ministers – gave the IPU a lot of visibility.

Other potential donors included wealthy individuals, corporations and foundations. Fund-raising required specific skills, time and networking. The IPU was not yet fully equipped to do that but it was making strides. He asked the members to assist in providing financial and human resources. A secondment scheme had started some years earlier and staff had been seconded to the IPU to assist with research, information, outreach and capacity-building from the parliaments of Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia and most recently, Egypt. The Egyptian Parliament was a long-standing Member of the IPU and had proposed to fill a gap by seconding a native Arabic speaker who could facilitate contacts between the Organization and its Members in Arab countries. He introduced Mr. Mokhtar Omar, whose secondment would start on 1 September 2012. The Parliament of Australia and the French Senate were in

discussions with the IPU about the prospects of seconding a senior staff member each. Such gestures were welcomed by the IPU, particularly at a time when it was facing staff and budget cuts.

Mr. Örnfjäder appealed to the members to do more within their respective geopolitical groups to help the Secretariat raise funds. There were lots of potential donors out there who would be interested in the IPU and its work.

The Secretary General wished to raise the question of the renewal of the membership of the Sub-Committee on Finance. The member from Armenia would have to be replaced for the Eurasia Group and his parliament had already nominated a replacement. The member from Mexico would also need to be replaced and in consultation with GRULAC, the Secretariat had proposed that Ms. Passada of Uruguay occupy that seat. Both nominations would have to be endorsed and formalized at the Quebec Assembly.

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the agenda

Implementation of the IPU Strategy for 2012-2017

(EX/263/9(a)-P.1)

The Secretary General indicated that when the Strategy had been adopted, it had been decided that its implementation would feature on the agenda of the Executive Committee. Under Strategic Objective 7 three major issues required attention: the format of the second Assembly of the year; the functioning of the Standing Committees; and the Committee on United Nations Affairs. The geopolitical groups had provided feedback on the second Assembly. Some felt that it was too short and should be lengthened from three to four days. Others were concerned that the IPU only pronounced itself on three topics per year that carried over to the next Assembly. Most felt that too little time was devoted to discussion of the emergency item and that the panel discussions should be more dynamic and interesting.

Ms. Ali Assegaf endorsed the view of the Twelve Plus Group: that the IPU should adhere to its current practice of discussing three topics at the second Assembly and adopting resolutions on them at the following Assembly.

Ms. Kadaga felt that there were too many external speakers from the United Nations and other agencies who spoke at length on topics sometimes unrelated to the business at hand. She considered that it was unfair for Members to have to wait a whole year to raise certain issues, which by then might no longer be topical.

Mr. Oliver said that given the Organization's financial constraints, it would be unwise to add an extra day to the second Assembly. However, he agreed that more time should be devoted to discussion of the emergency item in order to strengthen the resolution. Likewise, the panel discussions should be improved via strong moderators who kept time and focused the debate. Some of the best debates he had heard were spontaneous and more of those should be encouraged at the IPU. As a presenter, he used Power Point widely and advocated its use in order to make a greater impact. He proposed to make better use of modern technology to improve the quality and outcome of debates. In addition, he felt that it would be better to nominate one rapporteur per subject-item rather than the current two to avoid linguistic and cultural differences. Some of the best work in parliaments was done in committees and the same should be true at the IPU.

Ms. Passada echoed the views of the previous speakers. She said that members needed to have greater knowledge of issues and examine them in detail. It would be helpful for Committees to debate concrete items.

The Secretary General explained how the two annual IPU Assemblies had evolved over the years. Initially, there used to be two assemblies abroad of five to six days each. Because of financial constraints, the Members had decided to hold one big Assembly abroad and a smaller one of four days in Geneva. Members had subsequently realized that the second Assembly had been unable to accomplish all the work of a full-fledged Assembly and had decided to reduce it to three days, focusing mainly on governance and preparing the ground for the first Assembly of the year. However, some Members had been saying that it was not worth their while to travel halfway around the world to attend a three-day meeting. He proposed to add one day to the second Assembly in Geneva and subtract one day from the first Assembly abroad. Thus, they would remain with two equivalent assemblies of four days each as self-contained events, each dealing with three separate topics. He asked the members to give the Secretariat some time to prepare a paper on that proposal with a corresponding budget.

Mr. Al-Ghanim endorsed the proposal made by the Secretary General. The Arab Group was in favour of extending the second Assembly to four days and discussing six topics per year. The rules of the Standing Committees were not clear as they stood. It was preferable to give all Members an opportunity to express themselves in the Committees. Currently, the co-Rapporteurs prepared a report, which they imposed on the other Members without necessarily reflecting all of their views.

Mr. Örnfjäder reminded the members that tackling six issues a year instead of three would have both organizational and financial implications. Essentially, that would mean double the work. Their discussions should be taken to the national parliaments and the wider world to really make an impact.

Mr. Veillon observed that there were two opposing views on the table: extend the second assembly to four days and deal with six subject items a year or keep the

status quo. Was it worth asking the Secretariat to prepare yet another paper for discussion? It must be remembered that any change would have financial implications.

Mr. Oliver agreed with the compromise solution proposed by the Secretary General of two assemblies of four days each. That proposal could be discussed at their next session and recommended to the Governing Council for adoption.

Ms. Kaboré Koala observed that only half of the members of the Executive Committee were present. As a result, she felt that any decision should be deferred to Quebec. However, she asked the Secretariat to provide a basis for their discussion.

The President requested the Secretary General to produce a paper on the format of the second assembly and proposed that they defer the discussion until the Quebec Assembly.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General indicated that the standing committee system had been fairly simple until 2003, when it had been reformed. Previously, two committees met per assembly, topics were chosen and anyone could present a paper, which was distributed to the Members. Any Member could submit a draft resolution and the Secretariat would usually receive between 10 and 25. The standing committees would designate a drafting committee to examine the various resolutions, usually selecting one or two as a basis and drawing on the others. Those documents were read by few delegates, making it a costly and inefficient system. A decision had subsequently been taken to identify two co-rapporteurs to maintain a North-South and linguistic balance. They were entrusted with drawing up a report that would provide a basis for the discussions. Ideally, the members of the standing committees should have specialist knowledge and sit on relevant committees in their own parliament. In practice, however, that was rarely the case. The same was true for members of the standing committee bureaux. That lack of expertise was often reflected in the quality of the resolutions. There was also a lack of interest among some members, who did not attend meetings regularly. The co-rapporteurs faced many difficulties and required support from their parliaments. They did the best they could on their own. Sometimes the gulf between two co-rapporteurs could not be bridged because of ideological or linguistic differences. Many Members had complained to him and called for concrete results, rigorous follow-up and an end to dead-horse resolutions.

Mr. Veillon thanked the Secretary General for his honest analysis. He felt that resolutions were part of the IPU's core business but improvements had to be made on the methodology and implementation fronts. Continuity of members of the standing committees must be ensured to capitalize on expertise and experience. The committees required more support from the Secretariat by way of professional committee secretaries. They must be more involved in terms of documentation, drafting, follow-up and oversight of implementation. The way resolutions were currently handled left a lot to be desired. He suggested that amendments should be dealt with in plenary rather than in the drafting committee. In Kampala, his own experience in the First Standing

Committee had given him the impression of cattle-buying and the work had been conducted in a very unprofessional manner.

The Secretary General said that he could not agree more with Mr. Veillon. With the members' consent, he would align the Secretariat's proposal with the salient points of their discussion. He endorsed the view that the standing committees needed to be better serviced by competent staff with expertise.

Mr. Winkler recounted that in his experience, the main problem he had encountered was that of poor attendance rather than the poor quality of the debate. More rigorous discipline should be imposed. He pleaded not to expand the drafting committees because it was difficult to reach consensus as it was. He felt that the members of the Executive Committee should fill out the questionnaire that had been distributed and based on their responses, a paper should be produced.

Mr. Oliver believed that the IPU should take pattern from the Quebec Assembly, where there would be a special debate followed by an outcome document, interactive panel discussions and a special Gender Partnership Group session on gender-sensitive parliaments.

The Secretary General endorsed Mr. Winkler's suggestion and invited the members to complete and submit the questionnaire on the functioning of IPU Standing Committees.

Regarding the Committee on United Nations Affairs, he recalled that in 2007, the Committee had been established with a broad mandate to discuss the IPU's relations with the United Nations. It had been considered an appropriate vehicle for interaction between the two organizations. The members of the Advisory Group to the Committee had been appointed by the then President of the IPU. That experiment had been set up five years earlier and the time had come to take a decision about the Committee's *raison d'être* and future, if any. Should it remain as it was? Should it become a full-fledged standing committee? The Committee had been trying to find its way and its sessions were often not well-attended. In actual fact, a small core group was doing all of the Committee's work. Yet given the contribution the IPU had to make to the United Nations, the Committee in itself was worthwhile but its members needed to display greater commitment.

Mr. Oliver stated that the fact that the IPU had observer status at the United Nations was unique for a parliamentary organization. He felt that the IPU was not taking full advantage of that status and needed to develop more direct ties with the United Nations. The Committee was like a ship lost at sea and should be placed under the wings of a UN agency.

The Secretary General informed the meeting of an important development since the Bern Assembly: the UN General Assembly had adopted a strong new resolution calling for greater involvement of the IPU in UN processes. While there was some cross-fertilization between the IPU and the General Assembly, he would hesitate to

place the Committee under the stewardship of any UN body. He did agree, however, that there was a need for greater rapprochement with other UN agencies. He told the members that the Advisory Group would conduct a field mission in September with support from in-country UN agencies and the national parliaments of the members of the Advisory Group.

Mr. Örnfjäder said that members needed to ask themselves whether the committee should be continued or not and, if so, how it could be enhanced. A report on participation, activities conducted and results was required to allow them to take such a decision.

The Secretary General invited the members to drop in on meetings of the Committee on United Nations Affairs to form their own impression. A survey would be conducted at the Quebec Assembly on the usefulness of the Committee.

Mr. Oliver proposed that the IPU seek funds from the United Nations to support the Committee's work.

The Secretary General said that he had received two requests from potentially important constituencies. The first had come from a group of young parliamentarians as a result of a resolution adopted at the Bangkok Assembly on youth participation in the democratic process. Since then, a group of young MPs had been meeting informally in the wings of IPU assemblies. That group had recently requested a more formal mechanism for networking with the Secretariat. It requested its own space at assemblies and interpreting services. Their request reminded him of when the movement of women parliamentarians had started off at the IPU in an informal manner. The group was well aware of the IPU's budget constraints and pledged to do its own fundraising and develop its own programme. It wished to obtain an agreement in principle from the Executive Committee.

The second request had come from the Chief Government Whip of the Australian Parliament. A first meeting of a network of whips had been held a year previously in the Australian Parliament. The group had turned to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for support to create a more formal arrangement but had come up empty-handed. They were now turning to the IPU for support. They also wanted a space at IPU assemblies and pledged to be self-funded. Therefore, there were no budget implications for the IPU.

He asked the members if they would agree to continue to give a space to the young MPs and offer a similar space to the whips.

Mr. Oliver contended that he had no problem in supporting the young MPs per se but would impose one caveat: that a senior IPU officer attend its meetings in a supervisory capacity. He added that it would be difficult for whips to attend IPU assemblies if parliament was in session. As the IPU already had a link with the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP), he saw no reason for it not to establish ties with whips too.

Mr. Örnfjäder echoed the views of the previous speaker and asked whether there was an age limit for young MPs.

Ms. Kaboré Koala stated that there was a Youth Parliament within the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. She asked whether the group had to be composed of young or youthful MPs or members of a youth parliament. In many parliaments, quotas had already been introduced for women MPs and young MPs so she wondered about the need for that distinction. She was unaware of the French equivalent of the whip. In her parliament, it was the head of the parliamentary group who enforced party discipline during voting. Whips must surely already be included in delegations to IPU assemblies so why did they seek to have their own space? That would only lead to higher absenteeism in other committees.

Ms. Kadaga considered that today, the majority of MPs were young and she supported their inclusion in delegations. She suggested that a separate meeting be held once a year for whips if they could not attend assemblies.

Mr. Veillon endorsed the view to support the young MPs and provide them with logistical support. He was not sure how they would react to IPU supervision though. The concept of the whip was alien to Switzerland but he was not averse to supporting that group too.

Ms. Ali Assegaf echoed the views of the previous speaker. Young MPs should be given a space to meet but there was a need to set an age-limit. In her country, the age-limit for becoming an MP was 21 years. The concept of the whip was also unheard of in Indonesia.

Mr. Örnfjäder reminded the members that they still needed to find money for the Speakers' Conference in 2015. While he was not loath to giving a space to whips in principle, should they not be focusing on existing concerns?

The Secretary General begged to differ on the need to set an age limit. The interpretation of "young" varied from one country to another depending on context and culture. The group merely wished to provide a youth perspective on IPU resolutions. He introduced Ms. Zeina Hilal, Programme Officer with the Gender Partnership Group, who had been attending the meetings of young MPs. The ASGP had started off much in the same way many years previously. The Speakers who started attending IPU assemblies had requested administrative support from their Clerks and little by little, the Clerks started to network and set up a more formal mechanism, which today was a consultative body of the IPU. The ASGP had its own statutes and a small budget. The IPU paid it a subsidy of CHF 40,000 a year to make up for the shortfall.

The President felt that allowing different cultures to come together and promote peace and cooperation could only be positive. Providing young MPs with a space would serve them in good stead for the future and provide them with invaluable experience.

The Executive Committee decided to give a formal space to the young MPs during IPU Assemblies and to initially provide similar support to a brief meeting

of parliamentary whips during IPU Assemblies in order to determine their level of interest in a more formal network.

Item 4 of the agenda

IPU communications strategy

Ms. Pandya, Director of the Communications Division, made a PowerPoint presentation on the new communications policy. The policy had three main thrusts: (1) modernizing the IPU website; (2) creating useful information products; and (3) reorienting media policy and outreach. All three areas were interconnected. Some fundamentals concerning messaging and brand building needed to be addressed as a matter of priority, namely: identifying what the IPU did, what difference it made, building on its expert reputation and enhancing its visual identity. She cautioned that the changes would not happen overnight. The Geneva-based firm Young & Rubicam had been selected to create a visual identity for the IPU, including a logo and strapline. A survey had been sent out to the membership about their website needs and the 30 responses received would be fed into the process. Staff had also been consulted about their website needs. The firm had been asked to follow three different routes: modernize the current logo; devise one with a more factual representation; and create a more people-oriented logo. Members would receive an update at the Quebec Assembly.

Regarding website development, the recruitment of a web/ICT manager was underway. A temporary home page had been set up and would go live by the following week. She displayed the new page on the overhead projector, explaining that its content had been simplified and the information presented more pointed. The new website, like the old one, would be available in English and French.

The purpose of creating new information products was to support Members' work in strengthening parliament, building the IPU's reputation as a unique source of expertise and better informing the membership and the wider public about the IPU. Gender statistics were considered to be the best vehicle for giving visibility to the IPU, with the results of women's success often making the news and the likes of CNN, the BBC and the Guardian asking to use the IPU's gender data.

New tools envisaged included a bi-monthly e-bulletin in English, French and Spanish, an information kit on the IPU in English, French and eventually Spanish, and increasing use of social media, specifically Twitter. Ms. Pandya extended her thanks to the GRULAC Secretariat for providing Spanish translations of the e-bulletin and press releases. The intention was to produce information products in Arabic too in order to reach out to the full gamut of IPU Members. Those products would be used in outreach efforts to donors, national parliaments and the general public. She displayed a graph showing a steady rise in the number of e-bulletin messages that had been opened between mid-April (671) and the end of June (895), barring a few dips. She admitted, however, that she could not vouch that the messages were actually being read.

Media outreach involved increasing contacts, targeted distribution, languages and “opportunistic” communications. In her short experience at the IPU, she felt that while journalists were aware of the IPU, they did know an awful lot about what it actually did. Opportunistic communications entailed seizing opportunities when they arose to heighten the IPU’s visibility rather than merely being reactive. For instance, at the end of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians’ last session in July, she had held a press conference with its President, Mr. Tapo, a Malian MP, at the Palais. When asked by journalists what the IPU had done for him, Mr. Tapo replied that he would not be alive today had it not been for the IPU, which had previously handled his own case. That response had elicited a palpable reaction from the journalists. Every little bit helped to change perceptions.

In April 2011, there had been one mailing list of approximately 1,600 persons and organizations, including Member Parliaments. Specific lists were currently being set up, such as e-bulletin by language, foreign journalists by region, press releases, membership, diplomatic missions in Geneva and New York, international organizations, spokespersons, local journalists and donors. There was no point in trying to communicate if the IPU could not identify its target audiences. The number of press releases opened had also risen steadily over the past months, with a few peaks having been recorded: the item on Syria (678), the release of the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC - 828) and the number of women recently elected to the French National Assembly (600). Again, there was no way of telling if they were actually being read.

It was difficult to obtain statistics on media monitoring but she could safely say that gender statistics fared the best. News related to the PLC and the killing of Somali members of parliament had also generated wide interest. Interviews did not receive much attention but the communications team was working on remedying that situation.

The challenges that lay ahead were several: scant human resources, limited time, understanding, managing expectations and realistic optimism. It was worrying that some Members systematically did not open any e-mails from the IPU. Even with the translation of material into Spanish, the numbers remained static, in the vicinity of 7 per cent. That was not a reason to stop communicating in Spanish but greater efforts had to be made to reach out to the Spanish-speaking membership together with the GRULAC Secretariat. Ms. Pandya appealed to the members to reach out to other Members within their geopolitical groups. The IPU had to engage more with its Members in order to make the Organization more relevant. She was faced with a dilemma: how to enhance communications at the IPU in the face of budget cuts?

Mr. Örnfjäder asked whether there was an updated mailing list for members of parliament and parliamentary staff. Should national delegations try to reach out to the media using different contacts?

Ms. Ali Assegaf observed that communications at the IPU were currently one-way - from the IPU to its membership - while they should ideally be two-way. She asked how many persons visited the IPU website per day and per month and how many

followers the Organization had on Twitter. She cautioned against the use of that social media, which she felt was dangerous and could not be controlled. She asked why the IPU did not use Facebook, which was a safer medium.

Mr. Oliver enquired what the job description of the webmaster entailed. He suggested submitting op-eds to newspapers, for instance on the field mission to Myanmar conducted by the IPU Human Rights Committee. Those pieces were free and the IPU could write its own message. He also suggested making videos and sending them out to the media. Weeklies were always looking for timely, important news stories. Noting that all of those activities would have cost implications, he asked for a detailed breakdown of the communications budget.

Ms. Kaboré Koala asked whether the post of webmaster was temporary or permanent. Once the new website was created, would the post still be needed? How much would it cost?

The Director of the Communications Division admitted that it was necessary to have an updated e-mail list that was available to everyone. She appealed to parliaments to assist in the IPU's outreach efforts by distributing information at the national level. She had broached that topic with participants at the Information Seminar earlier that year and would continue to do so every year. She would also be establishing direct contacts with her counterparts in other organizations.

Mr. Örnfjäder indicated that information was being sent to individual members of parliament and the Secretariat of the Swedish Parliament, which in turn was forwarding the same information to individual MPs. Therefore, e-mails were being recorded falsely as having been opened twice.

The Director of the Communications Division replied that the IPU was not aware which Secretariats were forwarding information to individual MPs, which was why e-mails were sent to the two groups. An extranet was foreseen to serve as an interactive tool for the entire IPU community. It would create a space for dialogue and interaction between the Secretariat and its membership and between Members. The current number of Twitter followers stood at 127, which was not very high but it was a loyal following. The IPU did not tweet every day, so that was to be expected.

Mr. Tchelnokov, IPU Secretariat, added that the IPU website received between 35,000 and 40,000 hits per day, which translated into 1.2 million hits per month.

Ms. Ali Assegaf said that the Twitter account should be announced on the e-bulletin as she was not even aware of it.

The Director of the Communications Division replied that the Twitter account would be announced in the next e-bulletin under the International Day of Democracy item. She contended that Facebook was as unsafe as Twitter and both had to be managed carefully. The difference was that Twitter was less time-consuming. Using Facebook was not feasible because the IPU did not have the capacity to update or manage it.

The job description of the web manager included knowledge of ICT development, technical expertise and experience in building and managing websites. In essence, the web manager would have to build the web architecture of the IPU. That task would take over one year and would be done in stages. Someone would need to develop it on an on-going basis as the technology was constantly changing.

She provided a detailed breakdown of the communications budget as follows: CHF 240,000 for rebuilding the website; CHF 80,000 for website content and CHF 38,000 for information products. The new visual identity would cost a total of CHF 98,000.

Op-eds were not currently an option for the IPU because the values and messages of the IPU were not sufficiently provocative for newspapers. To become attractive, the IPU would have to go out on a limb and send stronger messages, which it could not do without landing itself in trouble. The IPU was not Oxfam or Amnesty International; it had its limitations and thus lost its ability to position itself and defend its values as an organization.

Audio-visual communications were very important and the IPU already had an institutional video in English. She intended to do more video releases with a view to bringing issues to life. Writing articles for weeklies deserved some consideration. More research would have to be conducted on journalists with an interest in parliamentary affairs.

Ms. Passada considered that the IPU needed to showcase itself and its work to its Members, even if that meant calling a spade a spade. The chairs of the geopolitical groups needed to take ownership of the Organization and use their good offices to convey valuable information. It was regrettable that some parliaments did not receive useful information. The IPU must sell itself through its Members. For that, good internal and external communications were needed. If Twitter and Facebook were going to be used, they would have to be managed and controlled by the IPU. The Organization could not afford to make mistakes but it was on the right track.

Ms. Kaboré Koala asked why the IPU promotional video existed in English only.

The Director of the Communications Division admitted that she had hesitated about what to do – have the video translated into other languages or do an entirely new one.

Ms. Ali Assegaf proposed to set up an ipu.com website that would be fed with news items. It was important to counteract the negative image of MPs having a lavish lifestyle and neglecting their constituencies. The IPU could resort to paid advertisements.

The Director of the Communications Division explained that the IPU promotional video had been made to raise awareness of the Organization among the membership. Priority would be given to producing that video in French and Spanish depending on the costs involved. Video news stories were something different

altogether. The IPU had a great heritage and historical archives, but they were not at all showcased. She felt that the IPU website was the place to put out information.

Ms. Passada warned that it was impossible to get all information out. The burning question was how the IPU as an organization could communicate better.

Mr. Oliver congratulated the Director of the Communications Division on her excellent presentation. The media saw the IPU as a talking shop. Any op-eds submitted by the IPU would have to move out of the comfort zone. The Organization's hands were tied insofar as it could not say or do as it pleased because of its mandate. The IPU had to be realistic; it could not grab headlines because of its intrinsic nature.

Mr. Veillon thanked the Secretariat for tackling the communications problem. He endorsed the point raised by Ms. Passada about forging closer ties with Members and agreed that the journalistic quality of information issued by the Organization could be improved. As he saw it, the post of webmaster could be full-time in the beginning and subsequently be reduced to a part-time position and complemented by an IT web post.

The Director of the Communications Division agreed that the IPU needed the assistance of its membership in its communications drive. At the Kampala Assembly, the Swiss Parliament had very kindly loaned the IPU a journalist from the Federal Assembly to assist her. Therefore, in addition to secondments, the IPU would welcome more of that kind of assistance. The IPU could give loaned staff international exposure while gaining assistance at no extra cost. There must be a symbiotic relationship between the IPU and its Members. She agreed with the member from Canada that the IPU could never compete for global headlines but it could capitalize on its empirical data and research. Certain human rights cases also provided human stories that struck a chord with the public. The one constraint in that area was the confidentiality issue.

The Secretary General remarked that the discussion on the communications policy was the longest they had held in many years. The Organization needed to change what it said and how it said it. That would entail a change in mindset at the Secretariat and among the membership. He recounted that some 20 years earlier, the IPU had been asked to help set up an agency in Stockholm known today as International IDEA. That agency invested four times as much as the IPU in communications and was currently better known than the IPU, which had been around for over 120 years. The IPU did not have an IT web specialist per se on staff. Their discussion was unique because it brought into question the fundamentals: how did the Organization portray itself? Was there a need to modernize? If so, to what extent? There was a lot to be done with little means. The IPU had every reason to be optimistic about its future, but it must persevere. It was already on the right track.

The President said that although the IPU had its limitations it was singular insofar as it was the only organization to make statements on behalf of the world's representatives. Indeed, parliamentarians from over 160 parliaments signed up to resolutions adopted by the IPU. That singularity should be cherished. At the United

Nations, government representatives voted on major global issues but at the IPU, it was the people's representatives – the conscience of the people – who voted.

Item 5 of the agenda

Parliamentary capacity building

(EX/264/5-R.1)

Mr. Chungong, Director of the Division of Programmes, said that three documents had been distributed: the review of the technical assistance provided by the IPU to parliaments; the technical cooperation programme for 2011-2012; and a document on feedback received from Sida.

Providing a historical overview, he recalled that the IPU had been first called upon in the 1980s to provide assistance to parliaments by way of study tours, library development and enhancing the way the parliamentary administration functioned. In the early 1990s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, there had been an ushering in of democracy. Parliaments started becoming more prominent due to the advent of multiparty democracy. Their oversight role began to take on greater importance. A flood of requests had come from Cambodia and Viet Nam in Asia and Burkina Faso in Africa. That period had also been marked by the emergence of other actors, such as UNDP, which had initially been very reluctant to deal with highly political parliaments.

The National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the World Bank Institute (WBI), commercial consultants and non-governmental organizations had come onto the scene. Yet the IPU was a frontrunner by virtue of its global reach and its capacity to develop standards and benchmarks. Currently, the United Nations asked the IPU to provide assistance in implementing UN programmes because of the latter's wealth of experience and expertise.

The IPU was involved in institution-building and had established criteria for democratic parliaments: representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective. It encouraged cross-fertilization between long-standing democracies and those in transition or fledgling ones in post-conflict societies.

At the parliament's request, the IPU first conducted a needs assessment and then set up a framework to enhance the parliament's performance. That served as a basis for the donor community to provide support for specific activities. Its work covered many areas, including review of committee systems, legislative drafting and assistance in producing bills on specific themes, such as violence against women and child labour. The IPU never imposed its views on national parliaments; it helped them develop a roadmap to enhance their performance.

Having done that for almost 40 years, the IPU had felt that it was time to evaluate its work in that area and had commissioned an independent review in 2011. The conclusions of that report had been taken on board, in particular those related to the IPU's core business and mandate: to promote democracy.

The review had found that the IPU had a comparative advantage: being a small organization it was flexible and did not have much red tape. It also had the support of national parliaments and thus a variety of political systems from which to draw. The IPU had thereby won the trust of parliaments worldwide.

The IPU was seen as neutral and not having any hidden agenda. Being an inclusive organization – spanning all political persuasions – it had developed expertise and understood the political dynamics of different countries.

He felt that UNDP was involved in many areas where it should not be and when it found itself in hot water, turned to the IPU for assistance. Unlike UNDP, the IPU was well-poised to relate to the various stakeholders in parliaments.

The review had found, however, that one of the IPU's weaknesses lay in impact assessment, i.e. its ability to monitor results against objectives. That remained a major challenge due essentially to a lack of human and financial resources. At any rate, demand would always outstrip supply.

He appealed for the political and financial support of the IPU's governing bodies by way of a political statement to deal with stiff competition from other agencies such as the United Nations and WBI. The IPU would be reviewing its current memorandum of understanding with the United Nations in a bid to include other areas. He wished to assure the members that the IPU did worthwhile work and had a real contribution to make in the area of technical cooperation.

Mr. Veillon thanked the Secretariat for providing such useful documentation on the IPU's core business. He assured the Director of Programmes that he could count on his personal support and no doubt that of the entire Executive Committee. Admittedly, there was always room for improvement. The IPU should learn from the weakness identified in the review and embrace change. It must enhance the transparency of its processes, follow-up and monitoring, which in turn would facilitate its contacts with donors. He asked the Secretariat to draw up a paper by the Quebec Assembly on the recommendations made by the review and how they were being implemented.

Mr. Örnfjäder expressed his appreciation for the three documents, which provided different perspectives. The IPU had made a wise choice by commissioning an independent expert to conduct the review and that practice should be applied to other areas of the Organization's work.

Mr. Oliver expressed concern over two points raised by the Director of the Division of Programmes: the threat posed by the United Nations and WBI and what form the support being requested from the Executive Committee should take. He asked

whether the IPU was a doer or a facilitator of field work. For instance, in Kenya, had the IPU actually helped the parliament draft a new set of Standing Orders?

The Director of the Division of Programmes replied that the IPU's role was to make expertise available to national parliaments. It was, therefore, a mediator because it did not possess the requisite in-house capacity or expertise. By way of example, it would approach the UK or Canadian Parliament, pay for experts' travel and subsequently undertake follow-up. IPU staff usually accompanied the field mission to ensure that IPU standards were met and practices applied. The IPU was not the doer per se but it had a comparative edge – it could rely on its Member Parliaments. The IPU had never had any difficulty in identifying experts.

UNDP spent two thirds of its budget on governance activities, focusing a lot on parliaments. It was involved in about 70 parliaments currently. Most of the IPU's work in that area was done jointly with UNDP. They had the funds and the IPU had the expertise. He called on the Executive Committee to recognize that there was a niche for the IPU. WBI developed governance programmes on combating corruption and enhancing transparency and accountability. The IPU had already collaborated with the Institute on budget-training seminars and was willing to work with a wide array of partners.

The threat from other agencies was serious and should not be taken lightly: UNDP was involved in 70 parliaments while the IPU was working with about 30. The IPU took criticism seriously and was taking on board a number of the recommendations contained in the review. An independent review had also been conducted on the Gender Partnership Programme and the IPU would like to do similar reviews in other areas as they were very beneficial. The IPU needed the political backing of its Members as some were providing funds to UNDP and not to the IPU.

The Secretary General reminisced about when he had been invited to join the IPU in 1991 to build up the technical cooperation programme, which was why it was close to his heart. He had endorsed the recommendations of the review and assured the members that they were being taken seriously and implemented.

The IPU had a unique possibility to assist many parliaments in developing countries because of its membership and experience. However, it was illusory to think that the IPU could provide such assistance in all countries. The Organization had a legitimate role to play in the Maldives, Sierra Leone and other countries emerging from conflict.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, UNDP had decentralized its activities to the level of its country offices in a bid to be closer to its beneficiaries. The Programme had found it difficult to develop a coherent policy that could be applied to each national context. UNDP did amateurish work, had no parliamentary experience and wasted a great deal of overheads. It would do better to improve its coordination and work in collaboration with the IPU. The pair had an uneasy relationship and in 2011, UNDP had

made a deliberate attempt to sideline the IPU from its activities in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Myanmar. That was when the IPU had started to put its foot down.

The IPU did not have country offices, a field presence or endless resources. UNDP had all of those things but in actual fact only occupied a place without achieving anything. It had developed a programme in Tunisia based on initial work done by the IPU without consulting the parliament. In the end, the entire programme had had to be reworked, leading to great inefficiencies. In Myanmar, a joint IPU-UNDP mission had been developed and a multi-year programme of assistance had been submitted to the national parliament. It would provide a common framework for any future assistance to the parliament. The IPU did not wish to be confrontational but sought an alternative route for collaborating with UNDP and other actors.

Mr. Oliver asked what action the Executive Committee could take to address that problem.

The Secretary General answered that the Executive Committee could draw up a policy paper or statement and recommend it to the Governing Council.

Ms. Kadaga asked whether the IPU could enlist the support of Speakers of parliament through a letter since UNDP was present in many countries. That would ease the burden of the Secretariat, which already had a full plate.

Mr. Oliver urged the Executive Committee not to sit idle and to prepare a position paper and recommend it to the Governing Council for adoption. It was important to let the world know about the IPU's role and stem competition from other actors.

Mr. Örnfjäder felt that MPs must examine how funds paid to the United Nations were being used. He called for greater accountability of programme funds and invited other members to contact their national authorities and urge them to channel funds towards the IPU instead of other agencies.

It was decided that the Secretariat would prepare a status report on implementation of the recommendations contained in the Technical Assistance Review and a draft IPU policy statement on technical support provided to parliaments and the IPU's role.

Item 6 of the agenda

Questions relating to IPU membership

(EX/264/6-R.1)

The Secretary General provided an overview of document EX/264/6-R.1.

Mr. Al-Ghanim remarked that over half of the countries mentioned in the document were members of the Arab Group: Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen. There had been positive developments in five of the six Arab countries, which he welcomed, but one of them, Syria, continued to be a cause for concern. A tragedy was currently taking place in that country, with innocent people being killed by pro-regime forces. The elections held in that country on 7 May had been anything but free and fair and thus lacked credibility. Moreover, all opposition parties had boycotted those elections. The IPU upheld the principle of free and fair elections that reflected the will of the people. Surely the situation in Syria was unacceptable given the sham elections and ongoing massacre. Furthermore, the parliament thus elected, by virtue of its silence, seemed to be actually sanctioning the killing of innocent civilians. The country was in a state of civil war, with the government having lost control of large swathes of the territory. The United Nations had ceased its operations in Syria. The Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Kofi Annan, had quit in the face of a worsening situation, his six-point proposal having been flouted.

In his personal capacity and as the representative of the Arab Group on the Executive Committee, he wished to move a motion to request the Quebec Assembly to vote on the suspension of the Syrian Parliament until such a time as the situation improved and a fully representative parliament was elected. He pointed out that the Arab League had suspended Syria and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), at its recent Islamic Solidarity Summit held in Saudi Arabia, had followed suit. He called on the IPU to send a clear message to the Syrian authorities that the current situation was unacceptable.

Mr. Winkler asked what rules governed the suspension of Members and if they could be applied to Syria.

The Secretary General observed that the Statutes were not particularly helpful because they provided for two cases where Members could be suspended: 1) where the parliament ceased to function; and 2) for non-payment of contributions. There was no rule governing the current situation in Syria and nothing in the Statutes stipulated that the parliament had to be elected. Perhaps a discussion was warranted on the possibility of amending the Statutes to cover cases such as the one at hand.

Mr. Al-Ghanim expressed his disagreement with the Secretary General's position, recalling that in the recent past, the rules had been bent in the cases of Egypt and Tunisia. He felt that the Executive Committee could and should take a decision in spite of the rules. The IPU was failing in its duty as an organization to express its solidarity with the Syrian people. He called for a vote on the matter and expressed his wish for unanimous support. He recalled that at previous IPU assemblies, the head of the Syrian delegation had made many a promise about restoring peace and order, none of which had been kept. He urged the members of the Executive Committee to vote on his proposal and take a decision about suspension at the Quebec Assembly.

Mr. Örnfjäder said that he represented his parliament and was therefore not ready to take such an important decision without first consulting the other members of the Swedish delegation. While he fully understood Mr. Al-Ghanim's arguments, he proposed to postpone the vote to the Quebec Assembly.

Ms. Passada and **Ms. Kadaga** endorsed the views of the previous speaker.

Mr. Veillon agreed entirely with the member from Kuwait. He asked whether there had been any precedents at the IPU regarding the suspension of a Member for political reasons. He felt that they should devise a plan B and at the very least prepare a strongly-worded statement on the situation in Syria.

Ms. Moulengui-Mouélé congratulated Mr. Al-Ghanim for raising that issue. As members of parliament they all had a duty to report on what was going on in their respective regions. The situation in Syria was indeed tragic and touched them all as human beings. However, the decision should be deferred to the Quebec Assembly because of the need to first consult the geopolitical groups. She advised against taking any hasty decision on such an important matter.

Mr. Oliver commended the member from Kuwait and assured him that Canada would give his proposal a lot of backing. However, from a legal standpoint, it was not possible to suspend Syria because the case was *ultra vires*. The IPU could either amend the Statutes or add a general discretionary clause to cover such situations.

Mr. Nhem Thavy echoed the sentiments expressed by the previous speakers.

Ms. Kaboré Koala sympathized with the member from Kuwait, adding that as human beings, they were all moved by the situation in Syria. She asked whether the Syrian Constitution contained a provision that nullified elections if a certain level of participation was not met. It was the IPU's prerogative to take a decision on the situation in Syria, but it should do so at the Quebec Assembly and with a solid legal basis. The Organization should not take a decision that would have negative repercussions.

Mr. Winkler questioned the need to wait until the Quebec Assembly to take action. He felt that the legal basis for their decision should be established and contacts should be made with former and sitting Syrian parliamentarians to ascertain their situation and the situation on the ground. If the Statutes were not amended, thus effectively preventing them from taking a decision, they should draw up a resolution on the situation in Syria. He asked the members of the Executive Committee to reflect on amending the Statutes to make provision for such cases in the future. The Executive Committee should make its position clear and vote on a decision to suspend Syria based on a two-thirds or three-quarters majority at the next Assembly.

Mr. Al-Ghanim apologized for taking the members by surprise and said that he fully understood and appreciated their positions. He would undertake to provide another document that established the legal basis upon which the Executive Committee could take a decision on suspending Syria. He noted that Article 4.2 of the IPU Statutes

governing the suspension of Members was very general in scope. He expressed the hope that a decision could be taken at the next session of the Executive Committee.

The Secretary General admitted that the case of Syria was unique and there had not been any similar precedents to his knowledge. The Italian Parliament had been “suspended” in the late 1930s in response to the fascist government’s invasion of another country. That case was not even remotely akin to the one at hand. More recently, a decision had been taken not to suspend the parliaments of Tunisia and Egypt although they had effectively “ceased to exist” because the countries were in transition and it was felt that a decision to suspend them would send the wrong message and discourage their efforts to move towards greater democracy. Therefore, their membership had been retained in spite of the Statutes. He agreed that the Statutes should be interpreted depending on the particular context. The problem was that Syria was currently a Member of the IPU and its case was not covered by either of the two conditions for suspension. He would prepare a paper providing an overview of precedents and interpretation of the rules governing the suspension of Members. The members always had the possibility of amending the Statutes. In the meantime, he proposed to issue a stern warning to the Parliament of Syria for remaining silent and not doing its part to protect the Syrian people.

Mr. Al-Ghanim asked for that matter to be included in the agenda of the Executive Committee when it met in Quebec. Based on his paper and that of the Secretariat, the members should be in a better position to take a decision.

Mr. Örnfjäder agreed to have that item placed on the agenda of the Quebec session. That would give the geopolitical groups ample time to discuss the situation. However, he proposed that they formulate a plan B just in case.

Ms. Kadaga also agreed to discuss the matter in Quebec and understood that the member from Kuwait needed to have the support of the Executive Committee.

Mr. Al-Ghanim thanked the members for their expressions of support and accepted the proposal for a statement to be issued by the Executive Committee on the situation in Syria.

The President said that he took it that the item would feature on the agenda of the next session of the Executive Committee, to be held in Quebec.

It was so decided.

Ms. Kadaga asked whether the IPU was reaching out to the Parliament of Somalia.

The Secretary General said that the IPU had not yet made any overtures. The Transitional Parliament had been admitted to the IPU and had been subsequently suspended for the non-payment of its contributions. The Organization had sent congratulatory letters to the newly elected parliament and Speaker but had not officially invited them to attend the Quebec Assembly. The parliament would have to pay its

arrears before being readmitted to the IPU and he was well aware of its financial difficulties. He asked the members to reflect on the issue and proposed in the meantime to offer the IPU's support to the parliament.

Item 7 of the agenda

Any other business

The Secretary General informed the members that the Arab Parliament had proposed that the IPU organize an international conference at IPU Headquarters in Geneva on the situation of detained Palestinian members of parliament. He personally felt that the plight of the detained MPs was already being addressed by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and that organizing such an event would undermine if not altogether jeopardize the Committee's work by sending the wrong signal to the Israeli authorities. There had been some positive developments lately: eight of the 23 MPs who had been held in administrative detention in Israel in early 2012 had been released and the Israeli authorities were starting to communicate with the Committee. It was his hope that more of the detained MPs would be released.

Mr. Örnfjäder reminded the members that organizing any additional or unforeseen event had cost implications.

Mr. Winkler added that the IPU should not organize an international conference that singled out one country. After all, the Human Rights Committee was dealing with cases from various countries. Perhaps an event could be organized at an assembly on the plight of detained MPs the world over.

Mr. Veillon agreed that the matter fell squarely within the purview of the Human Rights Committee, which was doing laudable work, and should remain there.

Mr. Al-Ghanim thanked the members for speaking out on that issue. The IPU should adhere to its principles. The Israeli authorities were running a sham and perhaps addressing the matter of the detained MPs through an international conference was not the best route to take. Nevertheless, the IPU should speak out against the situation of all detained MPs throughout the world, whose fundamental human rights were denied. He expressed his appreciation to the IPU for being instrumental in the release of many detained MPs. The Organization should not give Israel the impression that it was doing it a favour because detaining duly elected officials without charge was a wholly unacceptable situation. Therefore, in lieu of accepting the proposal by the Arab Parliament for an international conference, he felt that the IPU President should issue a statement on the matter.

Mr. Winkler reminded the member from Kuwait that when the Speaker of the PLC had been released in July, the IPU President had issued a statement welcoming the good news. He should issue another statement only when other MPs were released.

The Secretary General said that the Secretariat had been working on a statement on the situation in Syria and read out the text in English. He added that at opportune moments, the IPU would issue statements on the situation of the detained Palestinian MPs but for the time being, would not consider favourably the proposal by the Arab Parliament. He asked the members whether the statement on the situation in Syria was acceptable to them.

The members expressed their approval of the statement on the situation in Syria (see Annex).

Item 8 of the agenda

Overview of preparations for the Quebec Assembly

Mr. Oliver made a presentation starting off in French and ending in English to reflect Canada's bilingual nature. He said that Canada was honoured to host the 127th IPU Assembly, which was the fourth such event it would be hosting. 2012 marked the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Parliament's affiliation to the IPU and a commemorative plaque would be issued to mark that milestone. The Quebec Assembly would attract over 1,300 MPs and Observers and would be the biggest conference in Canada, with over 1,000 hotel rooms already reserved. The Assembly would be unique in every way, from the dynamic format and agenda to the state-of-the-art facilities and the eco-friendly policy in place. The Canadian IPU Group had invested a great deal in that endeavour and he promised that the 127th IPU Assembly would raise the bar for all future assemblies.

Mr. Örnjäder asked whether the Syrian delegation to the 127th Assembly had been announced.

The Secretary General replied that he had not had any news from the Syrian Parliament.

The President thanked the members for participating in the meeting and the Secretariat for preparing solid documents on which to base their discussions. He looked forward to welcoming them in Quebec come October.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m. on Thursday, 30 August 2012.

Appendix 3

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION NEWS RELEASE

IPU Calls on Syrian Parliament to Fulfil its Role and Protect its People

Geneva, 30 August 2012 - The IPU has today called on the Syrian Parliament to fulfil its legal responsibility to protect the Syrian people and urgently take a lead in ending the conflict in the country.

In particular, it calls on the parliament to hold the government to account, especially in the oversight of the security and military forces and ensuring the safety of innocent civilians.

Since the conflict between government and anti-government forces began in 2011, becoming bloodier as it has endured, the Syrian Parliament has been totally absent from the political stage and unacceptably silent on events as they have unfolded.

Although elected in May this year in elections boycotted by all the major opposition parties and by a fraction of eligible voters, the parliament is nevertheless obligated to protect all the citizens in the country irrespective of their political allegiances.

The call comes at the end of an extraordinary session of the IPU's Executive Committee in Geneva which ended today. The Committee also stated its intention to take the question of Syria's suspension from the IPU to its next assembly in Quebec City in October this year.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	264th Session of the IPU Executive Committee
DESTINATION	Geneva, Switzerland
DATES	August 29-30, 2012
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Donald H. Oliver, Q.C.
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 4,034.52
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,251.53
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$ 633.02
OFFICIAL GIFTS	
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	
TOTAL	\$ 5,919.07