



## **Report**

**Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella,  
Speaker of the Senate,  
and a Parliamentary Delegation,  
United Nations, New York,**

**November 13-15, 2013**



The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and a parliamentary delegation visited New York, from November 13-15, 2013.

The delegation has the honour of tabling its

## **Report**

The official delegation led by Speaker Noël A. Kinsella comprised the following members:

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate;

Mrs. Ann Kinsella;

The Honourable Senator Dennis Dawson;

The Honourable Senator Salma Ataullahjan;

Ms. Janelle Feldstein, Chief of Staff to the Speaker of the Senate; and

Mr. Gérald Lafrenière, Secretary to the Delegation and Deputy Principal Clerk, Parliamentary Exchanges.

### **Context – United Nations**

At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, 189 countries agreed to a global effort to tackle extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and other deprivations by 2015. This pledge turned into eight time-bound Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which formed a blueprint for international development agreed upon by all Member States and all of the world's leading development institutions. The MDGs, though aspirational and non-binding, reflect an international consensus on global development priorities. At the United Nations High-Level Plenary Meeting in September 2010, world leaders, including Prime Minister Harper, reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015.

At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2013, Member States agreed to accelerate action on the current MDGs until 2015, and established a process for articulating a new successor framework beyond this point, known as the post-2015 development agenda.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, mandated the creation of an intergovernmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. This group was tasked to develop concrete proposals for a set of new sustainable development goals (SDGs) for consideration in the UN development agenda beyond 2015. Since its inception, the Open Working Group has been hearing from global experts on key issues of interest and will continue to hold similar kinds of technical meetings until February 2014. After that point, the group will start negotiating the text of its report, expected to be finalized by September 2014. This will be one key input presented to Member States in preparation for the official intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

The Parliamentary hearings held on November 14 and 15, 2013, organized jointly by the United Nations and the InterParliamentary Union, were aimed at providing a parliamentary contribution to the on-going debate at the United Nations on the development agenda after 2015, when the current leading development commitments are set to expire.

The goal of the hearings were to allow the views of parliamentarians to be taken into account in the process established at the United Nations that is currently led by the Open Working Group on new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Objectives of the visit:**

The objectives of the visit were to:

- enhance relations between Canada and the United Nations;
- attend the parliamentary hearings aimed at providing a parliamentary contribution to new Sustainable Development Goals;
- enhance bilateral relations with countries attending the parliamentary hearings;
- share Canada's concerns regarding its ongoing participation in the InterParliamentary Union with other members of that Union;
- enhance bilateral relations with a number of countries whose permanent representatives to Canada are located in New York, including highlighting the range of Canada's interests with these countries and promoting educational exchanges;
- encourage ongoing parliamentary dialogue by further promoting parliamentary exchanges; and
- discuss foreign policies with respect to issues of international and mutual interest.

### **Working Luncheon**

At the invitation of Guillermo E. Rishchynski, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations, the delegation held a working luncheon with:

- H.E. Mr. Ali'ioaiga Feturi Elisaia, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Samoa to the United Nations;
- H.E. Mr. Narcís Casal de Fonsdeviela, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Andorra to the United Nation;
- H.E. Mr. Damiano Beleffi, Ambassador to Canada, Deputy Permanent Representative of San Marino to the United Nations;
- H.E. Mr. Daniele Bodini, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of San Marino to the United Nations;
- H.E. Mr. Anatolio Ndong Mba, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations;
- H.E. Mr. João Soares Da Gama, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations;
- Mr. Jeffrey Salim Waheed, Minister, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations and Deputy Commissioner to Canada;

- H.E. Mrs. Kunzang Choden Namgyel, Chargé d'affaires a.i., Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the United Nations; and
- Mr. Jiddou Jiddou, Chargé d'affaires a.i., First Counsellor of Mauritania to the United Nations.

This event provided members of the delegation an opportunity to share their thoughts with those present with the goal of advancing Canada's interest and also promoting Canadian values in relation to certain issues that were before the United Nations. Among those key values that Canada cherishes are freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The central issues addressed were: a resolution denouncing the human rights situation in Iran; the International Day of the Girl and the rights of women throughout the world, including the issue of child marriages; the promotion of religious freedoms; and efforts pursuing actions and sanctions against the North Korean regime. Another major topic of discussion was the current crisis in Syria.

During his remarks, the Speaker commented on the importance of the United Nations as a venue where all nations of the world are able to come together to debate matters of importance. While he added that not all countries share the same interests and values, it is only through communication that countries can foster a mutual understanding and trust, enhance cooperation and build goodwill. While acknowledging the important role played by the executive in this field, the Speaker stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in that it allows certain topics to be discussed in a less formal fashion, which can lead to new ideas emerging from the debate.

The Speaker also spoke of the importance of post secondary exchanges for students and academics. Not only do these exchanges provide participants with a better understanding of other regions of the world, they are helpful to all economies as they promote the sharing of knowledge. The Speaker encouraged the representatives of other countries to reach out to Canadian authorities and to find innovative initiatives that would increase the number of student and academic exchanges between Canada and their countries.

The Speaker also urged the guests to remind their parliaments of the existence of the Parliamentary Officers Study Program and indicated that the Parliament of Canada would be pleased to host senior officers from their countries in the near future.

The Speaker was applauded for this wonderful initiative and all agreed that the discussions were very productive.

### **Meetings – United Nations**

The delegation attended and participated in the two day parliamentary sessions in the Economic and Social Council Chamber in the main building of the United Nations. The meeting comprised four main sessions as follows:

- A new economic model for sustainable development: the path toward well-being;

- Gender as a linchpin of development: how to frame a new goal?;
- "Democratic governance" for sustainable development: what place among the new goals?; and
- Parliaments and the new post-2015 agenda: getting ready for implementation.

As stated previously, the goal of these deliberations was to provide a parliamentary contribution to the on-going debate at the United Nations on the development agenda after 2015, when the current leading development commitments are set to expire.

### **Other Meetings**

While in New York, the delegation also had the opportunity to have three parliamentary bilateral meetings and a meeting with representatives of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

At the meeting with Senator Robert del Picchia, a Senator from France and also President of the Twelve Plus Group of the IPU, the delegation discussed Canada's possible withdrawal from the InterParliamentary Union. Ongoing discussions in the Parliament of Canada have dealt with Canada's request for a reduction in the IPU's total assessed contributions with the aim of arriving at lower and more sustainable membership fees not only for Canada, but for all Member Parliaments.

Senator del Picchia, who was accompanied by Senator Michèle André, indicated that the Twelve Plus shared Canada's desire for a significant reduction in the IPU budget. He added that this was also the position of French parliamentarians.

Both the Canadian and French delegations agreed that positive changes at the IPU were possible. They mentioned that a new Secretary General would soon be elected. In addition, with the pressure of the Twelve Plus and other like minded countries, the IPU would have no other options than to review its programs. All agreed that it was time for the IPU to focus on its main objectives rather than trying to accomplish too much. It should focus on its parliamentary work and abandon other projects that are not related to building strong democracies. There was general agreement that too much of the funding was attributed to the IPU Secretariat, which meant that parliamentarians were left with less funding to conduct their activities.

According to Senator del Picchia, this would be an unfortunate time for Canada to cease participating in the IPU. He strongly believes that the organization needs Canada's presence and was very complimentary of the work done by Canadian parliamentarians. He underlined that 2014 would be a key renewal year for the IPU and hoped that Canada would be there for this turnaround.

The delegation also met with Senator Gabriela Cuevas Barron, who was head of the Mexican delegation and is Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. Speaker Kinsella mentioned the possibility of working on an educational and cultural treaty between the two countries. The goal would be to remove the barriers and costs that make it more difficult for students and academics to study in the other country. The

Speaker indicated that Senate committees could work collaboratively on this matter to find the appropriate solutions and to present them to government.

Senator Cuevas Barron was very interested in this proposal and noted that students who do not take the opportunity to study in another region do not have the chance to be exposed to different views. It was noted that while the jurisdiction for education in Mexico is at the national level, in Canada that power belonged to the provinces.

All the participants agreed that since we were able to negotiate and sign a free trade agreement, an agreement on education and technical training would be a logical next step in the relationship. A possible model for such an agreement is that of the European Union which has greatly facilitated academic exchanges in those countries.

The requirement for a visa for Mexican visitors was discussed as this was seen by Senator Cuevas Barron as a barrier to freer movement. All the participants agreed that the visa requirement is a subject that would need to be addressed during the discussions.

Senator Cuevas Barron and Speaker Kinsella ended the meeting by agreeing to actively promote more collaboration between parliamentary committees.

The delegation had the opportunity to meet with Senator Syed Nayyer Hussain Bokhari, Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan and discussed several parliamentary related matters, including transparency and accountability measures for parliamentarians.

Both Speakers then spoke of the importance of multilateral organizations such as the IPU and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Being fully engaged at the parliamentary level was viewed as being very important and that meetings organized by multilateral associations give those who participate a great opportunity to share their experiences and to gain knowledge from the experiences of others.

Another key element that is likely less well known is the opportunity these meetings provide to support parliamentarians around the world who may be dealing with difficult government regimes in their own countries.

Speaker Kinsella mentioned the concerns that Canada had raised in regard to the membership fees for the IPU. The Speaker of the Pakistan Senate responded that most parliaments around the world were also part of more regional associations, for example Asian parliaments, and that these had become very popular. He was of the view however that international organizations play a key role and that parliaments cannot restrict themselves to regional views. He hoped for Canada's continued participation in the IPU.

The members of the delegation were also graciously hosted by His Excellency Ambassador Robert L. Shafer, Permanent Observer, at the embassy of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta to the United Nations. He was accompanied by His Excellency Ambassador Oscar de Rojas, Deputy Permanent Observer.

Ambassador Shafer provided the delegation with a brief history of the Order of Malta, which was founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. He went on to indicate that today, the Order of Malta has been officially recognized by 104 countries and that it had observer status at the United Nations. They are a non-political organization and their main focus at the UN is on humanitarian affairs.

The non political nature of the organization has allowed it to establish hospitals in many areas of the world. He mentioned the hospital they operated in Haiti and also a maternity hospital in Bethlehem. They are actively involved in most countries of the world and are in a position to respond to disaster areas in an efficient fashion. There is no focus on race or religion, the aim is to take care of the needy and the poor.

Speaker Kinsella spoke of Canada's contribution to international aid and indicated that he would like to see those contributions increase. The possibility of governments providing funds through hospitaller organizations such as the Order of Malta was discussed and this could be an efficient way for governments to provide assistance to those in need.

### **Acknowledgements**

The members of the Canadian delegation would like to express their gratitude to all the staff of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations for their excellent efforts in making the visit such a success. In particular, the delegates want to thank Ambassador Guillermo E. Rishchynski, Ambassador Michael Grant and Mr. Michael Bonser.

They also wish to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Library of Parliament for the documentation provided as part of the preparation for this visit.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella  
Speaker of the Senate



## **Travel Costs**

Visit of the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate,  
and a Parliamentary Delegation, United Nations, New York, U.S.A.

<b>TRAVEL</b>	<b>\$ 5,301.74</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$ 6,519.81</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$ 1,556.14</b>
<b>PROTOCOL</b>	<b>\$ 401.60</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 13,779.29</b>