

Canadian Group  
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien  
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
to the Annual Parliamentary Hearing  
at the United Nations**

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

**New York (United Nations Headquarters),  
United States of America  
20-21 November 2007**

# Report

## Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nation

### Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations

#### 1. Background

Every year during the fall session of the United Nations General Assembly the IPU organises a Parliamentary Hearing as an opportunity for parliamentarians to exchange views with United Nations officials, representatives of United Nations diplomatic community, as well as scholars and leading academics. These meetings offer members of parliament and, in particular, those who are members of parliamentary standing or select committees on foreign affairs, national security and international development, an opportunity to receive substantive briefings and provide input to current debates at the United Nations.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. Programme for the Parliamentary Hearing

The theme of the 2006 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, which took place in New York on 20 and 21 November 2007, was: "Reinforcing the Rule of Law in International Relations: The Key Role of Parliaments." Panel sessions related to this theme addressed the following issues:

- Priorities, challenges and objectives of the new United Nations management team
- Observing the rule of law in the implementation of key international commitments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation
- The legacy of the international tribunals and the future course of the international criminal justice regime
- Towards a comprehensive International Convention on Terrorism: some critical questions

#### 3. The Canadian Delegation

The Parliamentary Hearing was attended by parliamentarians from more than 50 countries as well as several regional parliaments. Representatives of Permanent Missions to the United Nations, as well as of intergovernmental and civil society organizations, also participated. The Canadian IPU Group was represented by the following parliamentarians from the House of Commons: The Honourable Irwin Cotler, M.P.; Mr. Dean Allison, M.P.; and Ms. Alexa McDonough, M.P.

#### 4. The Parliamentary Hearing<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.ipu.org/Splz-e/unga06.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Elements of Sections 4 and 5 were drawn from: <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga07.htm>

As noted, the main theme of the Hearing was: “Reinforcing the Rule of Law in International Relations: The Key Role of Parliaments.” A detailed summary of the Parliamentary Hearing may be found online.<sup>3</sup> Some of the key conclusions concerning the role parliamentarians can play in reinforcing the rule of law in international relations were as follows:

- Parliamentarians must remain steadfast allies of the United Nations in all of its work, from human rights to peace and security, from development to the environment and climate change.
- It is vital that parliamentarians provide support to the parliaments of post-conflict countries.
- Thirty-two members of the IPU still need to sign or ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and parliamentarians should urge their governments to do so without delay.
- Parliamentarians from countries that have not yet reported to the 1540 Committee (a UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 on the prevention of proliferation) should urge their governments to do so.
- It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to exercise their oversight function with regard to government budgets and policies on arms.
- Parliamentarians should exchange experiences with their colleagues from other countries, for example through groupings such as the Parliamentary Network for Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND).
- Parliaments should be vigilant whenever governments agree to transfer nuclear energy technology to others.
- Parliaments should support efforts by their governments to declare nuclear weapons-free zones.
- Parliamentarians should track disarmament debates at the United Nations to know how their governments have voted.
- Parliaments should be involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation activities at the earliest possible stage.
- Parliamentarians can support the international criminal justice regime by working towards ratification of the Rome Statute by all States.
- Parliaments have a role to play in scrutinizing the proceedings of the international criminal tribunals to ensure that the money provided by States is being well spent and to assess their effectiveness in promoting peace and ending impunity.

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<sup>3</sup> See : <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga07/report.pdf>

- Parliaments should work to make sure that the right balance is struck by their governments between national reconciliation and the pursuit of justice.
- Parliaments should be steadfast in exerting their scrutiny and oversight powers in order to ensure the observance of the rule of law and due process.
- The foremost role of parliaments is to act as the guardians of human rights and civil liberties in the battle against terrorism.
- Parliaments should be vigilant in ensuring that governments adopt a balanced approach to combating terrorism that combines a strengthened security apparatus, the protection of human rights and measures to address the root causes of terrorism.
- Governments, including parliaments, should seek to address the needs of youth through social development, education and employment programmes in order to eliminate the feelings of marginalization and victimization that make them easy recruits for terrorists.
- Parliaments should ensure that greater attention is paid not only to the prevention of terrorism but also to its aftermath when it has not been prevented.

## **5. Conclusions<sup>4</sup>**

In accordance with the provisions of the latest General Assembly Resolution on cooperation between the UN and the IPU (A/61/6),<sup>5</sup> this year's Hearing was the first to be organized as a joint event of the two organizations. The change was more than a formality: it heralded a greater political commitment on the part of the United Nations to hear the views of parliaments on some of the most urgent issues of our times. Among other things, the Hearing provided an opportunity for members of parliament to meet and hear from the new United Nations management team. In this regard, the Canadian participants were impressed by

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<sup>4</sup> Source for this section: <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga07.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.ipu.org/un-e/a-61-L6-e.pdf>

the calibre of the discussants and the quality of the debate. The conclusions of the Hearing are to be circulated to the wider UN community as well as to all national parliaments.

Respectfully submitted,

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

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations
<b>DESTINATION</b>	New York (United Nations Headquarters), United States of America
<b>DATES</b>	November 20-21, 2007
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	The Honourable Irwin Cotler, M.P. Mr. Dean Allison, M.P. Ms. Alexa McDonough, M.P
STAFF	Mr. Joseph Jackson, Analyst
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$7,720.49</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$1,793.80</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$ 392.16</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>\$ 11.11</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,917.56</b>