

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the
Meeting of the Steering Committee of the
Twelve Plus Group**

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**Paris, France
14 March 2011**

Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

1. Introduction

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

There are six geopolitical groups formally recognized by the IPU: the African Group (44 members), the Asia-Pacific Group (27 members), the Arab Group (19 members), the Eurasia Group (7 members), the Latin American Group (19 members) and the Twelve Plus Group (46 members). Each group decides on working methods that best suit its participation in the activities of the Union and informs the Secretariat of its composition, the names of its officers, and its rules of procedure.

Canada belongs to the Twelve Plus Group and the Asia Pacific Group. Because Canada belongs to more than one geopolitical group, it submits candidatures for vacant positions within the Union through the Twelve Plus Group.

2. Background on the Twelve Plus Group

The Twelve Plus Group was formed in 1974 (as the Nine Plus Group) by IPU members from the European Community. Its purpose is to coordinate the action and policy of its member Groups and, where possible, to arrive at common positions on IPU matters. The word "Plus" was intended to indicate the openness of the Group to new members of the EC as well as other like-minded nations, such as Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Today, the Group has 45 members, including Central and Eastern European countries.¹

The Twelve Plus Group holds meetings on a regular basis during the IPU's spring and fall Assemblies. These meetings provide a venue for the Group's members to discuss the functioning of the Assembly and related meetings. Members also use these meetings to discuss administrative and substantive matters of consequence to the future activities of the Union.

The Chair of the Twelve Plus Group is elected for a term of office of two years. The Chair is advised by a Steering Committee of representatives from approximately seven to nine member countries and normally meets in the weeks prior to an IPU Assembly. The Steering Committee appoints a Vice-Chair among its members by consensus.

According to the *Guidelines of the Twelve Plus Group*, the Steering Committee shall include: the two most recent predecessors of the current Twelve Plus Chairperson (as long as they are members of their national IPU delegation); members of the Twelve Plus Group serving on the Executive Committee; further members, invited by the Chairperson on account of their particular abilities or merits, who could benefit the activities of the Twelve Plus Group as a whole.

¹ See <http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/geopol.htm> for a breakdown of geopolitical group membership in the IPU.

3. The Meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee

Nine parliamentarians participated in the meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee in London, United Kingdom on 14 March 2011. The countries represented were: Belgium, Canada, Croatia, France, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The Canadian parliamentarian in attendance was Senator Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., from the Senate of Canada.

The agenda for the meeting included issues and questions for consideration by the Twelve Plus Group at the 124th IPU Assembly (Panama, 15-20 April 2011). The purpose of the meeting was to debate and make recommendations concerning these matters. The attached appendix summarizes the decisions taken by the Committee on the occasion of its meeting in London.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Appendix

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE The Senate, Paris, France Monday, 14 March 2011

Participation:

Mr Robert del Picchia (France), *Chair*, Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium), Mr Donald Oliver (Canada), Ms Marija Lugarić (Croatia), Mr Marek Ziolkowski (Poland), Mr Robert Walter (United Kingdom), Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden), Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland), Mr Patrice Martin-Lalande (France).

In attendance:

Mr Kenneth Courtenay (United Kingdom) ; Mme Lena EKLOF (Sweden) ; M. Hrvoje SADARIC (Croatia) ; M. Wojciech GRUBA (Poland) ; M. Daniel ZEHNDER (Switzerland); M. Hardo MÜGGENBURG (Germany) ; M. Joseph JACKSON (Canada) M. Philippe Bourassé (France) ; Michel Drain (France).

Excused:

Ms Barbara Prammer (Austria), Mr Norbert Lammert (Germany).

The meeting started at 9 am, chaired by Mr Robert del Picchia (France), President of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee.

1. Opening of meeting

Mr Robert del Picchia (France), Chair, welcomed all delegates.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair suggested that item 4, dealing with matters related to previous meetings, be merged with items 5, 6 and 9 of the Agenda for joint consideration. *(This was approved)*

The amended Agenda was approved.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Twelve Plus Group Steering Committee's meeting in Paris on Friday 3 September 2010

The Minutes were approved without comment.

MATTERS RELATING TO THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

5. Draft strategic plan for the IPU, suggestions from the Twelve Plus' working group (*Mr de Donnea, Rapporteur*)

6. Matters related to the Executive Committee

9. Budget and

4. Matters related to previous meetings

The Chair reminded that the 2012-2017 IPU strategic plan and the first budget data for 2012 had been considered at the Executive Committee meeting in Geneva from 17 to 19 February. The *ad hoc* Twelve Plus working group had met the day before and

rapporteur Mr François-Xavier de Donnea's excellent work had been sent to the Secretary General of the IPU and incorporated to the documents used as ground basis for the discussions. A new text had been added to the framework document penned by the Secretary General on 19 February, taking into account the Twelve Plus Group's positions. Discussions in Panama would be based on it.

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium), Rapporteur, reminded that the working group had been established after the Secretary General's very first document had been circulated in October. The 40-page-long text had suggested countless activities, but had not stressed any priorities, cost of action plan or budget. The Twelve Plus Group had therefore asked for a specific evaluation of the cost of the strategic plan, and had again strongly stated that members' contributions should not increase. One also noted some confusion between goals, sub-goals and tasks amongst the Secretary General's original suggestions.

The working group had therefore suggested that substantial strategic goals be defined, followed by the instrumental goals needed to achieve the former. In February he had stressed three specific strategic goals – strengthening democracy through Parliaments, protecting human rights and promoting gender equality – as well as a fourth, not quite as prominent, goal: supporting the role of the Parliament to boost development. To achieve this, the main instrumental goals were: developing inter-parliamentary cooperation with the United Nations, strengthening the IPU as an inter-parliamentary cooperation tool and finally, modernising it.

In his latest document on 7 March, "*Better Parliaments for Stronger Democracies*", the Secretary General relied heavily on the Twelve Plus Group's method. He now listed three strategic directions, subdivided into detailed goals. The first strategic direction, "Better Parliaments for Stronger Democracies", included the Twelve Plus Group's first three substantial goals. The second one, on the increasing involvement of Parliaments on the international scene, contained the Twelve Plus' fourth substantial goal. But the other two goals he mentioned were: giving a parliamentary dimension to the UN's work, which seemed more like a means rather than an end; and strengthening peace and preventing conflicts, which should be a sub-goal of the strengthening of democracy. Finally, the third strategic direction, which aimed at making the IPU an essential instrument of inter-parliamentary cooperation, included all of the Twelve Plus' instrumental goals.

On the whole, the document had been much improved since October. The bulk of the Twelve Plus Group's suggestions was included in the new document, even though a few secondary items were emphasised. But there was still a major flaw: the lack of priorities and cost evaluation. Budgetary constraints would have to be taken into account anyway. Even the Secretary General admitted in his notes that all could not be implemented within the next five years, but did not prioritise any course of action. Since the IPU Members' contributions should not increase, choices would have to be made.

The Chair noted that the Twelve Plus Group's work had already improved the Secretary General's suggestions, but that they needed to go further.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) stressed that the last Executive Committee meeting in Geneva had not allowed complete coverage of the matter. The intense discussion had

dealt with goals and the vision to retain. The document released on 19 February did in no way derive from a joint agreement, but was a mere summary of responses during the meeting. Numerous ideas of the Twelve Plus Group had been taken into account: only this group had managed to present a consolidated document and a joint position, while others had spoken on a personal level. But one needed to avoid that this opinion be considered as a mere single voice. The Secretary General's new document, released on 7 March, shaped goals that were much too vague. No action could be derived from them. One had to state who should do what, how to achieve certain results... Simply put, more concrete goals were needed.

The Secretary General's accompanying letter indicated that he wished to present his new strategy at the Assembly in Panama. However, it was far from ready. One needed a more structured budget, priorities and concrete goals. The Executive Committee would be hard put to decide all this while meeting a mere day before the Assembly. Each of its members would have to respond to the presented document. Response from the Twelve Plus Group and from each of its members was required.

Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) wondered if budget development could be based on the latest version of the draft strategic plan. It probably could for the most part, but some matters had to be discussed further. Moreover, the new version should be circulated to all Parliaments, stressing that decisions had yet to be made. If all delegations had access to as much information as possible, a better quality discussion would be possible. Finally, the Twelve Plus Group had asked that a Select Committee on Financial Matters be created; it should be clearly stated that this new body would comprise members of the Executive Committee.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) said that no business company would ever make such a vague suggestion to its shareholders. Mr de Donnea should state in his report that the draft strategic plan could not be circulated to all delegations until the Executive Committee had decided over a "business strategy" or "business plan".

During his first ever Executive Committee meeting in February, Mr Donald Oliver had been surprised by the fact that only the Twelve Plus Group did express a separate opinion from that of the Secretary General; other members of the Executive Committee seemed to be mere spokespersons for the Secretary General. The meeting had been biased; had it not been for Mr de Donnea's astounding work, it would have been direly unproductive. Fortunately the Twelve Plus Group's position had mostly been taken into account.

In his latest version of the plan, the Secretary General intended for the IPU to be actively involved in the prevention of conflicts. However, this was a financial impossibility. This was up to the NGOs. All the IPU could do was to express its disapproval.

The draft strategic plan that would be presented to the Executive Committee should therefore indicate a cost before it was sent to other members of the Twelve Plus Group. Mr de Donnea's distinction between substantial and instrumental goals should also be maintained. The Secretary General wished to multiply goals, but one had to focus on essentials.

Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) stressed that the budget should not be established for the meeting in Panama, but for that of Bern, in October. Nevertheless, the Secretariat should communicate the elements needed for its development. In Panama, decisions would be made on general directions. The meeting was in less than a month and countries not sitting on the Executive Committee should know about the various matters so that they could express an opinion. Otherwise, there would be complaints, or at least people deciding without full knowledge of things. The IPU was not a business company: the idea was to develop a five-year action plan, and all members should be able to knowingly take part in the discussion. One should therefore inform them of the current stage of the process, stressing that it is as yet incomplete.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) thought that the Assembly could in no way decide over the strategic plan without an idea of the budget or the cost of activities for the next five years. Apart from the Twelve Plus Group, who would pay for the implementation of the strategy? The strategic plan could not be submitted in April while the budget waited until October: a strategy meant a budget, and without a budget, no decision was possible.

The Chair deemed it absolutely necessary to know the estimated cost of the numerous goals and which ones were priorities. A distinction was needed between what the IPU should or could do, and could put aside. Essentials could therefore be funded. A solution would be to stress in the strategic plan that the budget would remain constant over five years, and to allocate priorities, as concrete goals, according to available means. If the IPU absolutely wanted to pursue other priorities, it would have to find additional funding. But one should bear in mind that voluntary contributions were more and more restricted and, what's more, usually meant for a specific goal. In a nutshell, if the budget was not blocked for the whole of the strategic plan, increasing contributions would rapidly be needed, which the Twelve Plus Group was reluctant to do. Fortunately the budget had already been blocked for the next two years. Given how blatantly healthy the Swiss Franc was, budgetary contributions paid in other currencies had sharply increased.

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium) suggested that President del Picchia ask the Secretary General which section of the 2011 budget was allocated to the nine goals in the latest version of his plan. This was already March, so it should not be too difficult! - and if he wished to modify that allocation over the next few years. That way, they would get a sense of his priorities. Secondly, he could be asked to evaluate the cost, in 2011, of the goals defined by the Twelve Plus Group.

The Chair approved the suggestion.

Mr Robert Walter (United Kingdom) was shocked by how vague the proposed goals were. The process was far from complete, and a decision should not be made in Panama. However, as many people as possible should be involved in the discussion. The Secretary General's document should therefore be considered as a basis for consultation, but not as a decision. That the Twelve Plus' related work was the most constructive was reassuring. Since they provide more than half of the IPU budgetary contributions, they should impose a clear financing plan, explaining the Secretary General's intentions over the next five years and how this was related to parliamentary action.

The Chair stressed that the document would be definitely adopted in Bern in October, and not in Panama, which would give some time. Some thought that the document in its current stage should not be circulated; however, the Secretary General had sent its initial version to delegations and would circulate a new one in Panama. From then on, the Twelve Plus Group should be informed of how the work progressed.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland), having read the Secretary General's letter from 11 March, feared that he actually intended for a decision to be made on the strategic plan in Panama: he mentioned a "revised version to be submitted to the Assembly." The Twelve Plus Group's Steering Committee should make sure this did not happen.

The Chair said that such a vote should not take place. The Executive Committee had decided that the matter would be settled in Bern. A plan without a budget could not be approved.

Mr Marek Ziolkowski (Poland) viewed the Executive Committee as being organised around the Twelve Plus Group and the Secretary General, with the others being set back. The Secretary General knew that by submitting a proposition to the Assembly, he would gain support from most delegations; now, numerical majority prevailed during votes, not who donated money... This matter therefore required some major work from the Twelve Plus Group. But unlike the Secretary General's team, which was permanent, Member Parliamentarians of the Group could not dedicate themselves fully to those matters, which did not ease their task. Given the intellectual and political independence of the Group, the only one working seriously, that was unfortunate.

And what was the prospect of the US delegation coming back to the IPU, which would improve the Organisation's financial situation?

The Chair replied that reintegration was not yet on the agenda, since the House of Representatives had not yet reached a decision on the document through which the Senate had agreed to it. One could not speculate on that money coming in or not, and should make do with the current budget. But should the US delegation come back to the IPU, one would have to oppose the Secretary General spending their contribution on astronomical projects. Other members' contributions had steadily increased because of the Congress leaving. Should it come back, it would be natural to start by reviewing contributions downwards.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) reminded that the Secretariat General had planned an additional day of meeting for the Executive Committee in Panama. This might mean that he wished to finalise his project. In any case, the budget and future funding of IPU actions had to be discussed. President del Picchia's letter to the Secretary General should therefore mention that the project had indeed progressed since Geneva, but that the Executive Committee should be presented with priorities and a concrete budget.

As well as clear goals, **Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland)** added.

Mr Patrice Martin-Lalande (France) noted that the Secretary General, who had decisive influence within the Executive Committee, clearly wanted to quickly shape his strategy. Perhaps the Twelve Plus Group should directly inform other Geopolitical Groups of his position, so that the Secretary General was not their only source of information. This could enable a rebalancing of forces within the IPU.

The Chair reminded that this had been discussed in Geneva. It might indeed be useful to send the document penned by the Twelve Plus to other Geopolitical Groups. Many countries paying moderate fees wished for the IPU to take more and more actions funded by big contributors. The Secretary General would therefore easily gain their support for his strategy. Should it be put to vote, they would have the majority. The Twelve Plus *ad hoc* group carried out an excellent synthesis, accurately expressing the whole Group's opinions; it might be useful to share it with the Presidents of other Geopolitical Groups.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland), having read the Secretary General's letter, noted that he had expanded the discussion to all members of the Executive Committee. The Twelve Plus Group, too, should therefore inform them of its own positions, which might gain some support for the Twelve Plus' ideas. For the same reason, the Twelve Plus' position should preferably be presented to the other Geopolitical Groups.

The **Chair** noted that the latest version of the Secretary General's document, should it still be improved, incorporated part of the Twelve Plus working group's propositions. From now on, the Twelve Plus' positions on this text should be circulated to all the Geopolitical Groups before the meeting in Panama. The Secretary General noted how the Twelve Plus Group was determined to oppose a budget increase. Aware that the main contributors to the Union budget could come to a block, he had resolved to accept concessions. Being firm did pay off.

Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) reminded that Twelve Plus Group, as of 19 February 2011, had asked for seven documents to be circulated, including the one being discussed. The Secretary General had indeed committed to things, but how would they be implemented financially? The matter should be presented to as many Parliamentarians as possible, so that they could knowingly decide on the Twelve Plus Group's suggestions.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) stated that, at the last Executive Committee meeting, the Secretary General had committed to heed the Twelve Plus Group's propositions regarding goal and agenda defining for 2012 to 2017 and, in that respect, to make them more accurate. The Secretary General should really submit Mr de Donnea's suggestions in Panama.

The Chair confirmed that he would have to clarify his nine goals, along with their funding on a constant budget over the next five years.

Mr Patrice Martin-Lalande (France) wished that President del Picchia's letter to the Secretary General be circulated to all members of the Executive Committee.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) noted that the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting had not yet been released, and so it was impossible to determine whether the Twelve Plus' positions were accurately expressed. The participants' mere memory was not enough to make sure of this.

The Chair reminded that the Executive Committee had asked to be presented with an outline of the 2012 budget, as well as a draft strategic plan funding. The Secretary General had partly replied to the first request, but had rejected the second one on the

grounds that did not know what said strategic plan entailed. However, he was able to determine a cost for the above nine goals.

In Panama, the Executive Committee would undoubtedly substantially amend the submitted draft. Such amendments would call for a new document from the Secretary General, and a decision would be made in Bern. In any case, members of the Twelve Plus Group wished for the Secretary General's text to be sent before its general release to members of the Executive Committee, who would also be presented with the Twelve Plus Group's suggestions.

Finally, the President's letter to the Secretary General would incorporate Mr de Donnea's notes and would ask for the nine goals to be more clearly defined, as well as their cost and their funding on a constant budget.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) said they should carefully examine page 19 of the new draft strategic plan, released on 7 March. The Inter-parliamentary Union was a political organisation aiming at fulfilling its members' needs. However, was it a Parliamentarians' or a Parliaments' organisation? Confusions should be avoided, as they could affect the Union's essential missions.

The Chair confirmed that the IPU was a Parliaments' union rather than one of single Parliamentarians. Extreme caution was indeed needed. The Union could not pretend to dictate their conduct to Parliamentarians; however, the Secretary General seemed intent on allowing the IPU to impose on them. Of course the French Parliament, like any other, would never accept its positions being dictated by an outer organisation.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) wished that members of the Executive Committee did not have to find out about the budget at the start of their meeting in Panama. It should be presented to them well in advance, so they had time to study it.

The **Chair** stated that the Executive Committee had discussed the 2012 budget document. The Secretary General thought that the budget would reflect choices made regarding the strategic reform for the years 2012-2017. That went without saying. However, the new strategy would only be discussed in Bern in October. Moreover, the "budget document" submitted to the Twelve Plus Group could not be considered a draft budget: it did not have any comparative table with previous years, and the provided data were not justified. The Executive Committee's last meeting had insisted on the following imperatives: budget growth should be zero between 2012 and 2017, as well as the progress of national contributions. Since one had to make do with the current budget, any new activity funding would call for a redeployment of funds or the cancellation of another activity.

Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) insisted that the Twelve Plus Group must be involved in the 2012 budget development.

The Chair stated that, at the Executive Committee, the Twelve Plus had expressed the renewed wish to create a light structure allowing member Parliaments to take part in the IPU budget development, decisions over expenditures, their tracking and efficiency evaluation. The main role of Parliaments was to vote their State's budget and control its implementing. Wasn't it strange that they were not able to do this at the IPU, which was supposedly setting examples? The Executive Committee should be presented with the

draft budget in advance and be able to control expenditures. This small structure, consisting of Executive Committee members, would regularly be informed by the Secretary General of the budget development. This would allow, if needed, to present the equivalent of a supplementary budget bill aimed at amending such and such programme funds. The Secretary General would probably be reluctant; one would have to be firm.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) reminded that the Secretary General had first rejected the proposition before he had approved the creation of a structure outside the Executive Committee. This would require amending the IPU rules, an extremely long process which went against the Twelve Plus Group's goal. Instead, a structure was needed within the Executive Committee.

Furthermore, before dealing with future budgets, the financial results for 2010 had to be examined and some of them should lead to revisions in the way the IPU operated. Should the Secretary General or other Executive Committee members oppose modifications, the Twelve Plus Group would have to consider action for a better control of expenses, even if that meant for some Parliaments to stop their contributions.

Finally, one can but regret the presentation of the 2012 draft programme and budget penned by the Secretary General, which prevented from comparing between year-on-year budgeted expenditures.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) noted that, considering the IPU Statutes, the Executive Committee as it was had the clear ability to take part in the development and presentation of the budget.

Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) thought that the necessary creation of a Financial Committee within the Executive Committee did not prevent the creation of a similar structure within the Twelve Plus Group, where the main contributors to the IPU budget were.

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium) noted that the Secretary General's 2012 draft programme and budget table on page 11 was vague, since it did not state the allocation of expenses according to the programmes, particularly with regard to the 8.5 million Swiss Francs for staff costs. Programmes on pages 5 to 9 did actually have cost indications, but for very small amounts compared to the whole budget. Basically, two budgets should be presented: one broken down by types of expenditures and the other according to the cost of each programme. President del Picchia should explicitly ask the Secretary General for this last piece of information, and the latter could even explain how his own remuneration would be charged on the different programmes. In any case, it would not suffice for the Secretary General to reply by quoting pages 5 to 9, which were much too vague.

The Chair reminded that more accurate information would be given before the Panama session, and especially before that of Bern.

Mr Robert Walter (United Kingdom) wondered why the 2012 draft budget was not really a draft budget. For a useful comparison with previous years, it should have more tables than the mere one on the last page. It was very difficult to make decisions over a vague and incomplete document.

Ms Marija Lugarić (Croatia) thought that the budget review would be more consistent and thorough if not only last year's results but also the next three years' forecasts were analysed. Furthermore, the interim files adopted by the IPU between each session would benefit from specific figures, especially with regard to how the organisation costs of seminars were allocated between the IPU and host countries. The budget would thus be more thorough.

The Chair expected some comparative data by the onset of the Panama meeting and would again request them in his letter to the Secretary General, reminding him of the Twelve Plus Group's influence regarding contributions and their expectations in terms of budget control. He also noted that the English phrase "*budget outline*", "*esquisse de budget*" in French, allowed for inaccuracy.

Furthermore, IPU auditor Mr Møller had written a letter to the Union about noted expenditures in 2010 and stressed that travel costs had increased to 1,443,881 Swiss Francs. Mr Møller also reported high hotel costs incurred by the presence of the IPU President in Geneva. He then stated that part of those had been covered by the Namibian Parliament.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) added that this action, if confirmed, had only been taken following the auditor's observations.

The Chair deemed this a typical example of a problem which could be submitted to the future Financial Committee within the Executive Committee.

In the same letter, the auditor had reminded that the Secretary General's conditions of appointment should be decided by the Executive Committee. However, they had not been when the Secretary General's term had been renewed, and it had not been the Executive Committee that had decided to pay him additional premiums.

It was therefore important to expand budget information and to strengthen expenditure control.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) strongly emphasised that IPU rules must be followed. They stated that the Secretary General's contract was established by the Executive Committee, which had decided to delegate the task to a working group during the penultimate renewal. However, at the last renewal in 2010, no working group had been created and no information had been circulated. The Executive Committee had to deal with this matter, since the decision was theirs.

The Chair stated that without a decision by the Executive Committee, the Secretary General's new contract should have had the same terms as the previous one. But the matter went beyond the rules' aspect; it was also political. The Secretary General was elected by the General Assembly, which gave him a power he should not have. It would be better if the Executive Committee appointed him.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) did not dispute how the Secretary General was appointed, but that the Executive Committee had not decided over the terms of his contract renewal. This matter had to be dealt with.

7. Preparation of the 124th IPU Assembly in Panama

The Chair informed colleagues that the Assembly would discuss the following matter: "*Parliamentarians accountable for their actions: how to fulfil the voters' expectations*". A panel discussion would deal with the following subject on 17 April: "*Equity in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals for Children*".

a. Reports and resolutions of the Standing Committees

The Chair noted that this item did not call for observations.

b. Emergency items

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium) wished that the Twelve Plus Group submit a joint proposition for an emergency item with the Arab Group on the evolution of the situation in the Arab world. (*This was approved.*)

The Chair said that he would contact the President of the Arab Group.

c. Proposed items and rapporteurs for futures assemblies

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium) stated that the Belgian delegation considered suggesting the following item for the Kampala session: "*Parliaments' and the IPU's Role in Establishing Innovative Funding Mechanisms for Development.*"

Mr Patrice Martin-Lalande (France) would like the Second Standing Committee, which he presided, to deal with this subject.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) stated that the Swiss delegation would suggest a theme related to global governance, the role of the G20 and the improvement of democratic processes to the Third Standing Committee.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) said it would be good to include the subject of corruption, as presented by the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption.

The Chair stated that the Twelve Plus would decide in Panama over those two interesting suggestions.

d. IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

The Chair noted that this item did not call for observations.

8. Vacancies

The Chair informed the Steering Committee that there would be several vacancies related to the Twelve Plus Group at the Assembly in Panama.

- Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

Ms Sharon Castairs (Canada)'s term as permanent member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was coming to a close. For her replacement, the Group's Secretariat had received applications from Mr Bogdan Barovic (Slovenia) and from Ms Castairs' current deputy Ms Alima Boumedienne-Thierry (France).

For Mr **Patrice Martin-Lalande (France)**, it would be logical for the current deputy to become permanent and for the new entrant to be appointed deputy.

The Chair stated that a final decision would be made in Panama.

- Bureaux of the Standing Committees

The Chair reported that there would be vacancies for three Vice-Presidents and one deputy. Since 2003, Presidents' and Vice-Presidents' positions on the Standing Committees had been subject to a rota between the six Geopolitical Groups; this year, no President's position should be filled by the Twelve Plus. However, they should be able to put forward an applicant for at least one Vice-President's position. Before the Assembly in Panama it should be determined which Committee should be favoured.

10. Members of the Inter-parliamentary Union

- Egypt and Tunisia

The Chair reminded that the Egyptian Parliament had stopped working, and that the Executive Committee had decided to block the hypertext link between the IPU's and the Egyptian Parliament's websites. In line with paragraph 4.2 of the Statutes, it should now be decided whether Egypt's IPU membership should be suspended. The same question arose for the Tunisian Parliament. The Chair stressed that the Executive Council would have to examine the situation and make a recommendation to the Governing Council, which would make the final decision. The Twelve Plus Group should preferably present a common position to the Executive Committee.

M. Patrice Martin-Lalande (France) said that the Statutes provided three possibilities: exclusion, suspension of IPU membership and suspension from work collaboration. Since a positive message should be sent to the Egyptian people, he was in favour of the latter solution.

Ms Marija Lugarić (Croatia) wished that the Palestinian precedent be used to establish a transitional arrangement allowing Egyptian and Tunisian delegations to carry on their collaboration with the IPU.

M. Robert Walter (United Kingdom) agreed: Egyptian and Tunisian Parliaments had certainly not been overthrown, and suspending their IPU membership when they were actually moving towards real democracy would be a highly negative message. Could it not be considered that they were going through a lengthy transition between dissolution and new elections?

Mr Patrice Martin-Lalande (France) reminded the Thai precedent: the IPU had condemned the military coup, suspended the Thai Parliament's participation to its activities, noted the expressed intention of returning to democracy within twelve months and given that process its support.

The Chair reminded that, according to paragraph 4.2 of the Statutes, suspension would automatically affect membership. Declaring suspension would therefore mean condemning democratic processes. He was thus in favour of the President of the IPU or the Governing Council declaring that these two Parliaments would not be suspended but that the matter would be discussed again at the Assembly in Bern next October, since their extraordinary situation depended on the organisation of free elections on set dates.

Mr **François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium)** supported the Chair's proposition.

The Steering Committee decided to send the proposition to the Executive Committee.

- *Federated States of Micronesia*

The Chair informed the Steering Committee that the Parliament of the Federated States of Micronesia had asked to join the IPU. The Executive Committee would decide in Panama.

11. Scale of contributions

The Chair reminded that the scale of contributions from IPU Members might be reviewed and that a working group would meet in Panama to discuss the matter. After a heated debate, the Executive Committee agreed to have the members' list approved by the Geopolitical Groups; the Twelve Plus Group's representatives would be Canada, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom. M. Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) had been unanimously appointed President of the working group.

Mr Krister Örnfjäder explained why and how he had accepted this proposition after Donald Oliver had turned it down.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) went back to what she had said on the subject at the Executive Committee. The process seemed significant of the Secretary General's working methods: Members of the Committee had been put up against the wall. The working group was down to fourteen members as opposed to nineteen before, with an already appointed President, and that had not been on the agenda of the meeting. Why couldn't Geopolitical Groups choose their own representatives?

The Chair stated that the working group could not have too many members and that the Twelve Plus Group would not get more than four or five representatives on it.

The Steering Committee decided that the Twelve Plus Group would be asked to agree in principle to the list, subject to any last minute change in Panama, and that, should Sweden be part of the working group, Mr Krister Örnfjäder would preside it.

Ms Doris Stump wished for the Group to quickly reach a broad agreement to avoid being faced with arbitrary decisions when a new contributions' scale was established.

The Chair thought this was up to the President of the working group. Mr Krister Örnfjäder would discuss it with other members of the working group.

12. Specialised IPU meetings since the 123rd IPU Assembly in Geneva.

The Chair listed the specialised meetings that had taken place since the 123rd Assembly.

Mr Robert Walter (United Kingdom) welcomed the success of the seminar on Youth Participation in Democracy on 8 and 9 December in London.

Ms Mme Lugarić (Croatia) confirmed that the seminar had been excellent and well organised. However, she deplored its dates, which coincided with the review of national budgets. It would be better to organise such an event at some other time of the year.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) reported his speech at the conference on: "*Parliaments, minorities and indigenous people: effective participation to political life*" on 3 November, in Chiapas, Mexico, had been well received.

Mr Patrice Martin-Lalande (France) informed colleagues that a meeting on information and communication technologies would take place in May, a few days before the G8 summit in Deauville. Perhaps it would provide food for thought for the World Conference on e-Parliament, on 18, 19 and 20 May in Geneva.

The Chair stressed that events in Tunisia and Egypt had proved that such conferences were all but a luxury.

Ms Marija Lugarić said she had taken part to the 55th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which had focused on women's and girls' access and participation to education, training, science and technology.

13. Other IPU matters

- Committee on Middle East Questions

The Chair stated that the Committee would go from five to seven members. There were therefore vacancies for two permanent members and two deputy members. Since the Twelve Plus were the only Geopolitical Group along with Asia-Pacific to be represented on the Committee, it seemed ill-advised that they put forward a new applicant. The Chair also reported that the current President of the Committee, Ms Ann Clwyd, had asked for additional funds for on-field trips.

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium) gave the detailed composition of the Committee. He stressed that it did not have a major role, since Palestinian and Israeli delegates would not take part in it and that it no longer had any Arab Group representative. Sending an on-site mission would not be highly beneficial, except for new members to be aware of the situation there. And it was unclear whether the IPU could afford sending such a mission. Funding would be up to involved Parliaments.

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) confirmed that according to Arab officials, nothing had been happening at the Committee for two or three years, so much so that its goals might be questioned. It was one of two things: either one did not take it seriously, and did not provide it with funds or staff; or one supported it and gave it the means to work.

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea stated that the Committee's goal was to organise meetings between Parliamentarians; the thing was, they had to be willing to! For the time being, all its efforts had failed. One might eventually have to question its usefulness if it did turn out that no one was open to discussion.

The Chair noted that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean were open for discussion, and wondered why no Arab Group member was on the Middle East Committee.

- General Secretariat

Ms Doris Stump (Switzerland) wished that the Steering Committee went back on the still pending matter of the appointment of a Deputy Secretary General to the IPU. Furthermore, it had been announced that the Director of one of the four sections of the

General Secretariat was leaving. Would he be replaced? Finally, the IPU auditor's term was drawing to a close. One had to make sure that the procedure leading to his replacement was the proper one.

The Chair stressed that the Twelve Plus Group wished for the appointment of a Deputy Secretary General who could replace the often travelling Secretary General. But the latter would rather have a Director General appointed. It was up to the Executive Committee to issue a call for nominations, which would take some time. The Secretary General would probably argue that the IPU's limited resources would not allow for the recruitment of a Deputy Secretary General, unless the budget was expanded accordingly. This was another reason to request a more defined strategic plan: one would therefore know what money could be saved to allow such a recruitment.

The Executive Committee meeting in Panama would also be an opportunity to ask the Secretary General how he intended to replace the General Secretariat's members and in what proportions.

Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) was worried that members of the Executive Committee had found out that the Secretary General's pay had been increased through additional compensations without them having their say. During the same meeting the Secretary General had insisted on the cost of creating a Deputy Secretary General position; clearly it would be good to have precise cost information on this, to find out whether the IPU could afford it.

Mr Donald Oliver (Canada) would like the Twelve Plus Group to recommend a method for selecting the new auditor. In these days of hardship, he also deemed it logical that new observers at the Inter-parliamentary Union were asked to contribute to the Union's budget. Furthermore, the Twelve Plus Group would have to list the necessary criteria for the recruitment of a Deputy Secretary General in order to submit them to the Executive Committee. The Group should also be able to describe the expected structure and precise role of the financial control they were requesting. This should be on the Agenda of their next meeting. Finally, the next Executive Committee elections would take place at the Assembly in Bern. Applications had therefore to be considered from now on.

- Members of the Inter-parliamentary Union

The Chair informed colleagues that the Arab Group would put forward President of the Moroccan House of Representatives Mr Abdelwahed Radi, as a candidate for the IPU Presidency, since the term of current IPU President Mr Théo Gurirab was coming to a close in October 2012. Ms Nurhayati Ali Assegaf (Indonesia), President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, might also apply as a candidate. The Twelve Plus Group might decide in Panama whether they would nominate one of their members as a candidate, possibly Ms Katri Komi (Finland).

Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden) stressed that Ms Komi had all the necessary skills to apply. Her decision depended on the results of the legislative elections taking place on 17 April in Finland.

MATTERS RELATED TO THE TWELVE PLUS GROUP

14. Programme of activities and meetings at the 124th IPU Assembly

The Chair told colleagues about the schedule of the Twelve Plus Group's meetings in Panama. He reminded that the Steering Committee traditionally had to suggest the name of a Vice-President to help them with the numerous meetings in Panama.

15. Twelve Plus Group membership

The Chair informed the Steering Committee that the Albanian Parliament had paid its contributions for 2011 but was still three years in arrears. He intended to send the delegation a letter to remind them of this matter (*This was approved*). Furthermore, the Montenegrin Parliament had not acted any further on their announced intention of joining the Group.

17. Financial matters

The Chair said that on 31 December 2010 the Twelve Plus Group French Presidency had received a total of £51,671.40, or €59,790.88 from the outgoing British Presidency. Moreover, on 11 March 2011, 28 out of 47 member Parliaments had paid their yearly contributions. €25,444.84 had been received and made up for 65% of the expected total.

18. Any other business

The Chair noted that this item did not call for observations.

19. Date of next meeting

The Steering Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on Monday 12 September 2011 at the Senate in Paris.

The meeting ended at 12:50 pm.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
DESTINATION	Paris, France
DATES	14 March 2011
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C.
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Mr. Joseph Jackson, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 7,373.52
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 2,796.17
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$ 909.88
OFFICIAL GIFTS	
MISCELLANEOUS	
TOTAL	\$11,079.57