

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the 129^e IPU Assembly and
Related Meetings**

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**Geneva, Switzerland
October 4-9, 2013**

Report

Overview

From 4 to 9 October 2013, a delegation from the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) attended the 129th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings in Geneva, Switzerland. The Canadian delegation included:

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, President of the Canadian IPU Group and Leader of the delegation;

The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Senator;

The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator;

Blaine Calkins, Member of Parliament; and

Chris Charlton, Member of Parliament.

Meetings of the IPU provide an important opportunity for Canadian parliamentary diplomacy. This work occurs multilaterally, through the meetings of various committees and other bodies that take place during an IPU Assembly. It also occurs bilaterally, through the opportunities for important side meetings that IPU Assemblies create. The Canadian delegation was able to pursue both during the 129th Assembly, participating in debates of key IPU governing institutions, and in the panel sessions of its Standing Committees and the Committee on United Nations Affairs. Canadian delegates also held bilateral meetings with a number of individuals and delegations. Overall, throughout the Assembly, the Canadian delegation was able to engage in exchanges with their counterparts in the furtherance of the principles of representative democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and gender equality. They also addressed matters pertinent to Canadian foreign policy, including arms control, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, child protection needs in situations of armed conflict and displacement, and disaster risk reduction and resiliency.

The IPU: Background

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

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

- Contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.¹

The IPU's activities are pursued according to its [Strategy 2012–2017](#). That document provides the mission statement of the IPU:

The IPU, the world organization of parliaments, is a global forum for parliamentary dialogue, cooperation and action. It advances democracy and assists parliaments and parliamentarians throughout the world to fulfil their mandates.

The IPU facilitates political parliamentary debate, dialogue and cooperation. It promotes and defends democracy and the rule of law. It develops standards, disseminates information on good practices and helps build parliamentary capacity and efficacy. It defends the human rights of members of parliament and promotes respect for universal values, norms and principles. It works in support of gender equality and the participation of women, minorities and indigenous peoples in political and public life. It assists parliaments in coping with a growing international agenda and in contributing a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations and similar multilateral institutions.

In short, the IPU stands for: Better parliaments, stronger democracies.

At the close of the 129th Assembly, 163 national parliaments were members of the IPU and ten regional parliamentary assemblies were associate members.

The agenda of the 129th IPU Assembly

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the IPU on political issues. Two Assemblies are held each year, bringing together parliamentarians from around the world to study international problems and make recommendations for action.

The agenda for the 129th Assembly addressed the following items:

Election of the President and Vice-President of the 129th Assembly;

Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda;

Panel discussions on the subject items chosen for debate during the 130th Assembly to be held in Geneva in March 2014:

Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: The contribution of parliaments (First Standing Committee),

Towards risk-resilient development: Taking into consideration demographic trends and natural constraints (Second Standing Committee), and

¹ See: Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], "[Overview](#)"; and IPU, [Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#).

The role of parliaments in protecting the rights of children, in particular unaccompanied migrant children, and in preventing their exploitation in situations of war and conflict (Third Standing Committee);

Report of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs;

- Amendments to the Statutes and Rules of the IPU; and
- The role of parliaments in supervising the destruction of chemical weapons and the ban on their use.

Detailed reports on the 129th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings are available online.²

Overall, delegations from the parliaments of 132 countries took part in the work of the 129th Assembly. Of the 1,191 delegates in attendance, 539 were members of national parliaments. They included 40 presiding officers and 36 deputy presiding officers.

Highlights of the 129th Assembly and Canadian activities

IPU Governing Institutions and Committees

(i) Executive Committee

The IPU Executive Committee is a 17-member body that oversees the administration of the IPU, reporting to the Governing Council. 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 programme and budget of the Union. The Executive Committee controls the administration of the Secretariat as well [as] its activities in the execution of the decisions taken by the Assembly and the Council.”³

Senator Donald Oliver was elected to the Executive Committee in October 2010 for a four-year term. The Senator participated in the 267th Session of the Executive Committee on 4, 5, 8 and 9 October 2013. The Committee was seized with a full agenda during the Assembly, including the consideration of:

- Amendments to the IPU statutes and rules.
- Financial matters of the IPU, including a report and recommendations from the Sub-Committee on Finance on the 2014 draft programme budget, and a presentation by the External Auditor of the IPU’s accounts.
- The implementation of the IPU Strategy for 2012–2017.
- An update on the process for selecting a new Secretary General of the IPU: The deadline to receive applications was 1 September 2013. Going forward, “The President of the IPU and the Vice-President of the Executive Committee would examine the candidatures and produce a first short list of 20 candidates, which would be sent to all members of the Executive Committee on 15 October. The final

² IPU, “[129th IPU Assembly: Overview of Main Events and Decisions](#),” Geneva, 7–9 October 2013; and IPU, [Results of the 129th Assembly and Related Meetings](#).

³ IPU, “[Executive Committee](#).”

five short-listed candidates would be convened for interviews with the Executive Committee at the next Assembly.”⁴

- Questions related to the IPU’s cooperation with the United Nations (UN) System: The Executive Committee decided to establish a Sub-Committee that will “help prepare a revised cooperation agreement with the United Nations.”⁵ It will report back to the Executive Committee on the outcome of its work at the Assembly in March 2014.
- The IPU’s visual identity: The Committee decided to adopt a modified colour version of the current IPU logo, with the strap line: “For democracy, for everyone.”
- The admission and suspension of members: The Committee recommended the Governing Council’s approval of a request for affiliation from the Parliament of Bhutan and a request for reaffiliation from the Parliament of Somalia. With respect to on-going developments in Egypt, “The Committee noted that there was no functioning parliament in Egypt and examined the statutory provisions relating to membership, in particular those pertaining to suspension. It also examined the latest communication received from the interim Egyptian authorities on the roadmap. It concluded at its sitting of 5 October that, since the parliament had been dissolved and there was no institution that could exercise membership in the IPU, it had no option than to apply the provisions of Article 4.2 of the Statutes on loss of membership.”⁶ At its sitting on 7 October 2013, the Governing Council approved the request for affiliation (Bhutan) and reaffiliation (Somalia), and decided to apply the provisions of Article 4.2 in the IPU Statutes with respect to the Parliament of Egypt.

One of the primary objectives of the Canadian delegation to the 129th IPU Assembly was to raise the issue of the IPU’s assessed contributions (i.e., the annual membership fees that must be paid by each Member Parliament). Canada’s membership fees for the IPU are the highest of all the inter-parliamentary organizations to which Canada belongs.

In an extraordinary appearance before the Executive Committee on 4 October, the **Canadian delegation** elaborated on the request it had made in the months leading up to the Assembly for the IPU to revisit its overall budget. The delegation requested that the IPU reduce its total assessed contributions, which would result in lower and more sustainable membership fees not only for Canada, but for all Member Parliaments.

In her remarks to the Executive Committee, **Senator Salma Atallahjan** highlighted the contributions that Canada has made to the IPU over the years, the leadership it has taken in various IPU governing institutions and committees, and its long-standing commitment to and belief in the IPU. The Senator stated that, going forward, scaling back the total assessed contributions will require a re-examination of everything the IPU does – through a systematic review – so that essential activities can be identified. She argued that addressing these financial questions will ultimately require the IPU to focus on its core business, namely: the advancement of representative democracy, human rights and

⁴ IPU, [Results of the 129th Assembly and Related Meetings](#), p. 12.

⁵ IPU, “[Executive Committee](#)”; and IPU, “[Cooperation with the United Nations System: Sub-Committee Established by the Executive Committee to Help Prepare a Revised Cooperation Agreement with the United Nations](#),” Governing Council, 129th Assembly, Geneva, CL/193/9-R.2, 9 October 2013.

⁶ IPU, [Results of the 129th Assembly and Related Meetings](#), p. 11.

gender equality. As the Senator indicated in her presentation, the intention was for such an exercise to inform the IPU budget for 2015 (which will be considered at the October 2014 Assembly).

On 5 October, the Executive Committee approved a response to the Canadian request that was subsequently distributed to the IPU's six geopolitical groups.⁷ It indicated that the Executive Committee understands the concerns expressed by the Canadian delegation about the level of its financial contribution, a concern which is shared by other members. The communication further indicated that the Committee is planning to undertake a full review of the IPU's consolidated budget in the context of the mid-term review of its Strategy for 2012–2017. One of the objectives would be to reduce Members' fees as well as to seek other sources of income. The Committee is welcoming input from Members regarding areas they consider to be essential ("core business"), as well as areas they consider to be less important. A report on the review will be considered at the March 2014 Assembly.

The delegation continued its discussion of these matters in its geopolitical groups and in side meetings.

(ii) Sub-Committee on Finance

The IPU Executive Committee has a six-member Sub-Committee on Finance. It is responsible for overseeing and providing advice to the Executive Committee on all financial and budgetary matters of the IPU.⁸ The membership reflects the IPU's geopolitical groups and the need for gender balance. During the 129th Assembly, three new members were elected to the Sub-Committee, including **Senator Donald Oliver**. Furthermore, in its meeting of 9 October 2013, Senator Oliver was elected by the Sub-Committee as its interim Chairperson (until its next meeting at the Assembly in March 2014).

(iii) Gender Partnership Group

Senator Oliver also participated in the work of the Gender Partnership Group, which is comprised of two male and two female representatives who are appointed by the IPU Executive Committee from among its members. The Group is "entrusted with seeing to it that the interests and visions of both parts of the population are taken into account equally in all IPU's activities and decisions."⁹

The Group's 33rd Session took place on 5 and 7 October 2013, and addressed:

- The participation of women parliamentarians at the IPU.
- Gender mainstreaming at the IPU:
- The Group finalized a draft gender mainstreaming document further to comments that had been received from its members and the members of the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians in the weeks preceding the Assembly. A number of suggestions from the Canadian Group were incorporated in the final

⁷ For a list of the geopolitical groups, see: IPU, "[Geopolitical groups](#)."

⁸ IPU, "[Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee on Finance](#)."

⁹ IPU, "[Gender Partnership Group: Women in the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#)"; see also: IPU, "[Gender Partnership Group](#)."

version. The document was approved by the Governing Council on 9 October, and will be implemented throughout the IPU in 2014 and beyond. The Council's report states that the document outlines "the strategy through which the IPU would achieve its objectives of institutionalizing gender equality at the IPU, promoting equality in representation and participation, building capacity and developing mechanisms for gender mainstreaming."¹⁰

- The situation of parliaments with few or no women members.

Members of the Group, including Senator Oliver, also took part in an exchange with members of the UN Committee on the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) on 7 October. This meeting was convened with the view to exploring ways to strengthen the involvement of parliaments and parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention.

Senator Oliver provided a report on the Group's activities to the Governing Council on 8 October. He noted key statistics with respect to women's participation in IPU activities and bodies, including the proportion of total delegates (539) present at the 129th Assembly who were women (168 or 31.2%), which was slightly lower than the 128th Assembly (32.6%). Of the 134 delegations participating in the Assembly, 16 were composed exclusively of men (13%). Four delegations had their voting rights at the Assembly reduced for being represented exclusively by men more than three times in a row. With respect to IPU bodies, the Senator reported that women's participation has remained steady at about 30% in the Governing Council and Executive Committee. Nevertheless, women remain underrepresented in the bureaus of the IPU Standing Committees and in the Committee on United Nations Affairs. The Senator expressed the Group's hope that the new rules governing the Standing Committees, once adopted, would remedy the situation. He also noted the Group's emphasis on the need for women to be encouraged to submit their candidatures for these positions, particularly by their geopolitical groups.

On the gender mainstreaming document, the Senator noted the Group's call for the rapid development of an implementation plan.

Regarding the situation of parliaments with no women members, the Group noted positively that the number of such parliaments is decreasing. At the time of the Senator's report, there were four parliaments with no women members (Micronesia, Nauru, Vanuatu and Qatar).

Senator Oliver also reported on the dialogue session the Group held with the delegation of Saudi Arabia on 7 October. They congratulated the delegation for the fact that 30 women had been appointed to Saudi Arabia's Parliament (the Majlis Ash-Shura) for the first time ever in January 2013. The Saudi delegates told the Group that men and women members have since been working together in all parliamentary bodies. Legislative initiatives related to women's participation in decision-making were also being discussed.

¹⁰ IPU, "[193rd Session of the Governing Council](#)," Geneva, 7 and 9 October 2013.

(iv) Governing Council¹¹

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the IPU. Moreover, several committees fall under the Council and report to it on their work. Meetings of the 193rd Session of the Governing Council were held on 7 and 9 October 2013. **Senator Salma Atallahjan, Senator Donald Oliver, Member of Parliament Blaine Calkins, and Member of Parliament Chris Charlton** attended these sessions.

The Governing Council had a number of items on its agenda:

- Membership of the IPU;
- The financial situation of the IPU;
- The IPU's programme and budget for 2014;
- Implementation of the IPU Strategy for 2012–2017;
- IPU Cooperation with the UN System;
- The activities of IPU committees and other bodies;
- The 130th IPU Assembly;
- Future statutory and specialized IPU meetings;
- Amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules;
- Appointment of an internal Auditor for the 2014 accounts; and
- Elections to the IPU Executive Committee.

The Governing Council approved the IPU's [operating budget](#) for 2014 of CHF13,746,400. The budget was prepared with no overall increase in the level of members' assessed contributions. The report of the Council's sessions indicates that "Total contributions from Members would be lower in 2014 than they had been in 2007." While individual members "would see a difference in their individual contributions" as a result of the recent update to the United Nations scale of contributions (which serves as the basis, with some modifications, of the IPU scale), the "overall total had not increased." For 2014, Canada's share of the contributions to the IPU budget is 3.22% (it had been 3.39% in 2013).

Following the decision that had been taken by the Governing Council during the 128th Assembly, the Council considered a set of amendments and sub-amendments to the IPU's Statutes and Rules. They notably modify the format of IPU Assemblies and strengthen the role of the Standing Committees. Going forward, there will be two four-day Assemblies each year; and meetings of the four Standing Committees (which will now include the Committee on UN Affairs) and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians will be held at both Assemblies. The Council approved the amendments to the Rules of the Standing Committees and expressed a favourable opinion to the Assembly on the proposed amendments to the Statutes (which were subsequently approved by the Assembly; the Assembly also approved related amendments to its own rules).

¹¹ This section reflects highlights of the sessions of the Governing Council. The full report of the 193rd Session of the Governing Council is available [here](#). For further details, see also: IPU, [Results of the 129th Assembly and Related Meetings](#), pp. 9–11, 14–16, 42–44, 51–55, 59–65, and 68–72.

In addition to reports from the IPU Executive Committee and the Gender Partnership Group, the key decisions of which were described above, the Governing Council received reports from the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliaments, the Committee on Middle East Questions, and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU. It also received a report on the meeting of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, and took note of the Committee's report on its mission to Jordan in June 2013, which assessed the impact of the on-going crisis in Syria on refugees and host communities. The Council adopted the rules developed to facilitate that Committee's work.

The Council also received a detailed report from the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. That body is mandated to address human rights violations faced by parliamentarians themselves. Over the years, the work of the Committee has helped to secure redress for many, including their release from jail. During the 129th Assembly, the Committee examined the cases of alleged violations of the human rights of 180 parliamentarians and former parliamentarians from 24 countries. It submitted 21 resolutions to the Governing Council for adoption relating to cases in the following countries: Bahrain, Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Iceland, Madagascar, Maldives, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine/Israel, Sri Lanka and Turkey.¹² The Council approved the resolutions, noting the reservations expressed by the delegations of Bahrain, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sri Lanka, and the comments made by the delegations of Chad and Thailand.

Finally, the Governing Council confirmed the decision to hold the 130th IPU Assembly in Geneva in March 2014. It also approved the list of future IPU meetings and activities.

Meetings of the Geopolitical Groups

Article 25 of the IPU Statutes permits IPU members to form geopolitical groups. There are six such groups formally recognized by the IPU; they play an important role in the functioning and activities of the organization. Each group determines its own working methods which suit its participation in the IPU, and informs the Secretariat of its composition, officers and rules of procedure.

Canada belongs to two geopolitical groups:¹³

- The Twelve Plus Group (which includes 47 like-minded nations from Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel); and
- The 31-member Asia Pacific Group.

While Canada participates in the activities of both groups, it submits candidatures for vacant positions within the IPU only through the Twelve Plus Group.

¹² See: IPU, Human Rights of Parliamentarians, "[Resolutions on Human Rights Cases Adopted by the 193rd Session of the Governing Council.](#)"

¹³ IPU, "[Geopolitical groups.](#)"

(i) The Asia-Pacific Group

A meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group was held on 6 October 2013. **Senators Salma Atallahjan, Donald Oliver and Dennis Dawson**, and **Members of Parliament Blaine Calkins and Chris Charlton** took part in the meeting.

Agenda items included:

Opening Remarks by the Chairperson;

Adoption of the agenda and minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2013;

Briefing by the Group's representatives on the IPU Executive Committee on the work and decisions of the Committee:

This item included discussion of Canada's proposal for a reduction in the IPU's total assessed contributions, and the Group's response to the communication received from the IPU Executive Committee on that topic;

Report from the ASEAN+3 Group;

Vacancies to be filled during the 129th IPU Assembly;

Emergency Item for the Assembly Agenda and Nomination to the Drafting Committee on that topic;

Comments on the IPU Draft Budget for 2014 and Selection of a Spokesperson for the Asia-Pacific Group; and

Comments on the Amendments to the Statutes and Rules of the IPU.

(ii) The Twelve Plus Group

Meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were held on 6 and 9 October 2013. All **Canadian delegates** participated in the meetings.

Agenda items included:

Adoption of the agenda and minutes of previous meetings.

Report on the Group's Steering Committee meeting in September 2013.

Reports from the Group's representatives on the IPU Executive Committee:

This item included discussion of Canada's proposal for a reduction in the IPU's total assessed contributions, and the Group's response to the communication received from the IPU Executive Committee on that topic.

During the discussion, **Senator Atallahjan** reiterated the communication from the Executive Committee and the fact that the delegation was requesting a reduction in IPU member contributions in a way that would benefit all Members in the long term, and not only the Canadian Parliament. She invited the Group to respond to the communication by identifying essential and priority activities for the IPU, versus less important ones.

Amendments and sub-amendments to the statutes and rules.

Recruitment of the future IPU Secretary-General.

Elections to vacancies.

Emergency Item.

Meetings of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians.

Reports on meetings of IPU Committees, Working Groups and other bodies.

Standing Committee meetings:

On 9 October, **Blaine Calkins, M.P.**, who is a co-rapporteur for the IPU's Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, provided an overview of his work to date on the topic: *Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the contribution of parliaments*. He highlighted the fact that his background paper argues that the advancement of both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament requires persistent efforts to ensure that all states follow through on their commitments to implement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. That Treaty must also be strengthened where necessary. All of these initiatives depend on political will.

Mr. Calkins took stock of the 8 October panel discussion that had been held on this topic, noting that there were around 30 interventions from delegates during the debate; some written inputs had also been received. He summarized the process going forward, indicating that he was looking forward to receiving suggestions for the draft resolution that will be prepared in the lead-up to the 130th Assembly. The draft will be circulated in January 2014.

Meetings of the Advisory Group on the IPU Committee on UN Affairs.

Panel discussions organized in the framework of the 129th Assembly.

Preparation of the 130th Assembly in Geneva (17–20 March 2014).

Matters related to the Group (including financial matters).

Date of the next meetings.

The Emergency Item

The Assembly received eight requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in its agenda. Following a roll-call vote, the item entitled *The role of parliaments in supervising the destruction of chemical weapons and the ban on their use* was added to the Agenda. It had been put forward jointly by the delegations from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The **Canadian delegation** voted in favour of this item.

A debate on the emergency item was held on 8 October 2013; the topic was subsequently referred to a drafting committee. In its final sitting on 9 October 2013, the Assembly adopted a [resolution](#) by consensus. The resolution, inter alia, "*Calls upon* all parliaments to condemn the use of chemical weapons and contribute to an environment of zero tolerance for the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons." The resolution also "*Calls upon* parliaments to demand the speedy destruction of any declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, including abandoned stockpiles, and stresses the need for compliance with the deadlines stipulated in the Chemical Weapons Convention."

IPU Standing Committees

Panel discussions were held on subjects that are currently being considered by the three IPU Standing Committees. Work will continue at the 130th IPU Assembly in March 2014, culminating in the consideration and adoption of resolutions on these topics at the close of that Assembly. Canadian delegates took part in each of these sessions.

(i) Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security addressed: “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the contribution of parliaments.” The session began with a screening of a documentary on the history of the nuclear arms race that had been made available by the delegation of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Blaine Calkins, M.P., is a co-rapporteur on this topic and presented his [background paper](#) to the delegates. In his speech at the opening of the session, he noted that he had structured his paper around an underlying premise – that in the 21st century, the challenges of dealing with nuclear weapons are more political than technical. On this basis he expressed his belief that parliamentarians can play an important role in the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world. He also argued that while there are many useful initiatives that should be supported, emphasis must first be placed on ensuring the implementation of existing international commitment. He continued by stating:

The long-standing challenges we continue to face are threefold. The first is non-proliferation – preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons. The second is disarmament – ensuring that the states that already possess nuclear weapons reduce, and eventually eliminate their stockpiles. The third relates to cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Our predecessors succeeded in addressing all these challenges when they negotiated the 1968 *Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, the NPT. Almost all states have joined the treaty, which represents their legal and political commitment to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. Our fundamental task is to ensure that the NPT is implemented. In doing so, we must consider the balance in emphasis between efforts targeting non-proliferation and those focused on disarmament. As I’ve argued in my paper, while states have differed in their views of the relative urgency and importance of accomplishing one or the other, both are necessary.

In terms of non-proliferation, the NPT regime has seen real success. The number of states possessing nuclear weapons now stands at no more than nine. This number is still too high, but it is much lower than many had feared and predicted before the treaty was negotiated. This number also underlines the point that the vast majority of states have lived up to their commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons.

At the same time, however, proliferation has occurred. Some states that are parties to the NPT have violated their commitments under it. In at least one case, rights under the treaty have been used to develop seemingly peaceful nuclear capabilities, which have then been used to develop nuclear weapons. Moreover, a few states that never signed the NPT can, and have, developed nuclear weapons.

As I’ve written in my paper, I believe that the key means of preventing further proliferation, while also ensuring disarmament, is to focus on strengthening the

NPT regime. It must be made universal and it must be fully implemented. This means ensuring that all states parties live up to their commitments. It also means convincing states that have not signed the NPT that it provides the ultimate guarantee of security and stability. Given that perceptions of insecurity are often the result of regional dynamics, diplomatic efforts that address regional concerns may help convince states of the benefits of the NPT regime.

Turning to disarmament, it is estimated that there are currently over 17,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The five Nuclear Weapon States, who are recognized as such in the NPT, bear the primary responsibility for disarmament, and remain accountable for their progress or lack thereof in this area. This applies first to the United States and Russia, because they have by far the largest arsenals. But it also applies to the other Nuclear Weapon States. Some may advance cynical explanations for the lack of greater progress on disarmament. However, a basic fact remains that as long as the threat of proliferation or even nuclear terrorism exists, perceptions of insecurity will remain, negatively affecting prospects for disarmament.

While the NPT is the foundation, other key instruments are necessary to reinforce it and achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. These include a fully in-force Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. While such a treaty has been negotiated, and was opened for signature in 1996, it cannot enter into force until key states with nuclear capabilities have ratified it. Eight have not yet done so. Another key instrument will be a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty that would ban the production of fissile material that provides nuclear weapons with their explosive power. Because the UN Conference on Disarmament works by consensus, certain states have been able to block negotiations, including those related to this critical treaty. We must redouble our efforts to achieve both these treaties.

Let me conclude by noting that, as parliamentarians, we recognize the challenges involved in generating and sustaining political will on a national basis, let alone around the globe. Two decades after the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons are arguably no longer seen as a “ballot box” issue. It can at times be difficult to focus governmental attention on an issue that may seem less pressing for some in the face of other challenges related to the economy and daily life. However, given the threat posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons, we must redouble our efforts to keep nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament on the policy agenda.

There is some room for optimism. The past five years has seen renewed interest and momentum. In 2008, the UN Secretary-General put forward a Five-Point Proposal on Nuclear Disarmament. In an important 2009 speech in Prague, U.S. President Barack Obama spoke of “America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.” One year later, the 2010 NPT Review Conference was successful in achieving a final document that contained an Action Plan for moving forward.

Many states also argued the need to redouble efforts toward the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world at the high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly

on Disarmament at the end of September. Our job is to support this momentum from a parliamentary perspective.

As I argued in my paper, I believe that parliamentarians bring unique knowledge and responsibilities to the table in dealing with these issues. They can:

Hold governments to account, and ensure compliance with commitments and responsibilities under the NPT;

Convince governments to accept new commitments, mechanisms and responsibilities as required; and

Mobilize public opinion and civil society to demand faster and deeper action.

We should also remember that this topic isn't new ground for us. In 2009, the IPU adopted a comprehensive resolution that outlined key elements for success. In 2011, the IPU convened an expert panel, and in 2012 helped publish a very useful handbook that includes best practices and policies. Going forward, it is my view that the resolution we develop between now and our 130th Assembly should build on these important markers, and add new ones as appropriate.

By adopting a strong resolution in 2014, I believe we can help to lay the groundwork that will make the 2015 NPT Review Conference a success, on the road to the eventual achievement of our broader goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Co-rapporteur, Ms. Yolanda Ferrer Gomez of Cuba, also presented her background paper. In addition, addresses were provided by the Ambassador of Costa Rica to the UN, Mr. M. Dengo (Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations), Baroness Miller (a member of the House of Lords in the United Kingdom), and Alyn Ware (Global Coordinator of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament). More than 30 delegates made interventions during the ensuing debate.

Following these interventions, **Mr. Calkins** provided his wrap-up comments summarizing the session and, building on that, previewed some of the key issues that will need to be considered by the co-rapporteurs as they begin to prepare a draft resolution for the consideration of delegates to the 130th Assembly in March 2014. **Senator Salma Atallahjan** also attended the panel session.

(ii) Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade addressed the topic: "Towards risk-resilient development: taking into consideration demographic trends and natural constraints." Presentations were given by the co-rapporteurs, Mr. P. Mahoux (Belgium) and Mr. S. H. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), who provided highlights of their background papers. The Committee also heard from Ms. M. Wahlstrom, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Ms. M. Temmerman, Director of the Department of Reproductive Health and Research at the World Health Organization. In the ensuing debate, delegates focused on disaster risk reduction and the key factors heightening vulnerabilities, including "population growth, inadequate planning, unpredictable weather and climate change patterns, and urban

development.” Delegates also discussed key points that would need to be addressed in the resolution to be considered at the March Assembly in 2014, “including the question of political responsibility for risk governance, the importance of gender-sensitive risk-resilient policies, the role of local governments, and the need for formal and informal education at all levels.”¹⁴

Senator Ataullahjan and Member of Parliament Chris Charlton attended this panel session.

(iii) Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

The Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights debated the topic: “The role of parliaments in protecting the rights of children, in particular unaccompanied migrant children, and in preventing their exploitation in situations of war and conflict.” Presentations were given by the co-rapporteurs, Ms. G. Cuevas (Mexico) and Ms. J. Nassif (Bahrain), who provided an overview of key issues raised in their background papers. The Committee also heard from Ms. L. Aubin, Coordinator of the Global Protection Cluster led by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Professor M. Mattar, Executive Director of the Protection Project at Johns Hopkins University. Delegates discussed the risks and vulnerabilities faced by children in situations of armed conflict, displacement and migration, and strategies to advance child protection. This included discussion of adequate documentation for children, national child protection systems, and child protection legislation. Delegates noted that the implementation of existing legislation and policies, and related funding and training needs, remains a challenge in many countries.¹⁵

M.P. Chris Charlton attended this panel session.

IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

A dedicated IPU Committee on UN Affairs was created in 2007 “in order to better respond to the growing partnership between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations.”¹⁶ The Committee held [multiple sessions](#) during the 129th Assembly on 7 and 9 October. It had a full agenda, examining:

The interaction between national parliaments and UN country teams:

This discussion was informed by the report of the June 2013 mission of the Advisory Group of the Committee on UN Affairs to Cote d’Ivoire;

Follow-up to the Fourth UN conference on the Least Developed Countries;

The implications of the recently adopted Arms Trade Treaty;

The implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (regarding the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors); and

The promotion of international commitments regarding the rights of vulnerable groups, in particular indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities:

¹⁴ IPU, [Results of the 129th Assembly and Related Meetings](#), p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 7–8.

¹⁶ IPU Cooperation with the United Nations, “[IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs](#).”

Following that session, the Committee endorsed the “Call to Act: Ensuring the Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Political and Public Life,” which had been submitted by a group of parliamentarians. It “identified a series of measures that could and should be adopted by the IPU and by its Member Parliaments in order to ensure that persons with disabilities were better able to fulfil their potential in political and public life. This, in turn, would go a long way towards establishing truly accessible and inclusive parliaments.”¹⁷

A comprehensive report of these sessions is available online.¹⁸ In general, the sessions included active discussions among the delegates and were enriched by presentations by a number of senior UN officials, including, among others, the UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Disarmament; and, the Chair of the UN Security Council 1540 Committee.

Senator Dennis Dawson attended all of the Committee’s sessions; **M.P. Blaine Calkins** attended the sessions on the Arms Trade Treaty and Security Council Resolution 1540.

(i) **Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs**

Senator Dawson is a member of the 13-member Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs. The Senator took part in the Group’s meeting held on 8 October. The Group discussed “the status of IPU reform, in particular from the perspective of the Committee’s transformation into the fourth IPU Standing Committee.” Following its discussions in Geneva, the Group decided to meet again on 15 November 2013 during the annual IPU hearing at the UN in New York in order to discuss future activities.¹⁹

Other Outcomes

On 9 October, a special debate was held in the plenary on the humanitarian impact of the Syria crisis, with the participation of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. A. Guterres. “The debate provided the participants with an update on the latest figures and issues related to refugees in the region.” Moreover, “The panelists highlighted the magnitude of the human tragedy, the resilience and dignity of refugees and the generosity of host countries.”²⁰ Also on 9 October, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. N. Pillay, addressed the Assembly, focusing on parliamentarians’ contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights. “The ensuing exchange with parliamentarians focused on the contribution of parliaments to the reporting procedures of the UN Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies, in particular the CEDAW Committee.”²¹ **Senator Salma Atallahjan, Senator Donald Oliver, and Member of Parliament Chris Charlton** attended these sessions.

On 8 October 2013, a panel discussion was held on the topic, “Political Party Control over Parliamentarians: Striking the Right Balance.” In addition to the presenters, some 25 parliamentarians, including **M.P. Chris Charlton**, attended this interactive session. It

¹⁷ IPU, [Results of the 129th Assembly and Related Meetings](#), p. 49.

¹⁸ See: IPU, [Results of the 129th Assembly and Related Meetings](#), pp. 45–51.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

aimed to “identify the challenges that parliamentarians face and identify good practices in striking a balance between competing demands from parties, constituents and others, such as the media.” It also aimed to “provide guidance for further IPU research on the relationship between parliamentarians, political parties and the institution of parliament.”²²

At the closing sitting of the Assembly, a statement “[on the terrorist attack in Kenya](#)” was issued by the Assembly President. It expressed “deep concern” over the attack that had recently taken place at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, and extended sympathy to Kenya’s Parliament and people. The President’s statement condemned terrorism in all its forms, and appealed “to national parliaments to ensure that counter-terrorism laws are in place, and more importantly, are enforced.” The resolution was endorsed by the Assembly.

The IPU launched two handbooks for parliamentarians during the Assembly:

- The handbook, [Sustaining Parliamentary Action to Improve Maternal, Newborn and Child Health](#), “offers parliamentarians an overview of the key concepts and facts that will be helpful in raising maternal, newborn and child health on the policy agenda.” **Senator Salma Atullahjan** was one of the parliamentarians who had provided input to this handbook.
- A second handbook, [Internal Displacement: Responsibility and Action](#), was produced in cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Bilateral Meetings

Members of the Canadian delegation held bilateral meetings with a number of other delegations, including:

- Australia,
- Bangladesh,
- Germany,
- Japan,
- Macedonia,
- New Zealand,
- Pakistan,
- Thailand.

These exchanges provide an important opportunity for the Canadian Group to engage in parliamentary diplomacy, to increase its understanding of other countries and regions, to discuss key bilateral issues and matters pertinent to the international agenda, and to work towards shared multilateral goals, including in the context of the work of the IPU.

²² IPU, “Concept Note,” [Panel Discussion on Political Party Control over Parliamentarians: Striking the Right Balance](#), 129th Assembly and Related Meetings, Geneva, 7–9 October 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Senator
Canadian Group of the
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	129 th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings
DESTINATION	Geneva, Switzerland
DATES	October 4-9, 2013
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Salma Ataullahjan Hon. Dennis Dawson Hon. Donald H. Oliver, QC
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Blaine Calkins Ms. Chris Charlton
STAFF	Ms. Line Gravel, Secretary to the Delegation Ms. Allison Goody, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 35,341.88
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 17,069.76
HOSPITALITY	\$ 245.60
PER DIEMS	\$ 10,472.30
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 728.19
MISCELLANEOUS REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 63,857.73