

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  
3 September 2010**

# **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.<sup>1</sup>

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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**

Six parliamentarians participated in the meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee in London, United Kingdom on 3 September 2010. The countries represented were: Belgium (staff only), Canada, Croatia, France, Latvia (staff only), 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 123<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly (Geneva, 4 to 6 October 2010). 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 Friday, 3 September 2010

#### **Present:**

Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom), Mr Robert del Picchia (France), *Vice President*, Mrs Marija Lugaric (Croatia), Mr Donald Oliver (Canada), Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden), Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)

#### **In Attendance:**

Mr Philippe Bourassé (France), Mr Bertrand de Cordovez (France), Mr Kenneth Courtenay (Secretariat of the Twelve Plus Group), Mrs Lena Eklof (Sweden), Mr Joseph Jackson (Canada), Mrs Sandra Paura (Latvia), Mr Martin Peleman (Belgium), Mrs Dominique Rees (Secretariat of the Twelve Plus Group), Mr Daniel Zehnder (Switzerland)

#### **Apologies for Absence:**

Mr François-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium), Mr Juan Moscoso del Prado (Spain), Mrs Karina Petersone (Latvia), Mr Rudy Salles (France)

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

#### **1. Opening of meeting**

**Mr Robert del Picchia (France), President ad interim**, welcomed all attendants, especially Mrs Ann Clwyd, who represented the *de jure* President of the Twelve Plus Group, and to Mrs Marija Lugaric, who was filling in for Mr Juan Moscoso del Prado (Spain) for Southern Europe.

#### **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

#### **3. Approval of the Minutes of the Group Steering Committee's meeting held in London on Monday, 1 March 2010.**

The minutes were approved without comment.

#### **4. Matters related to previous meetings**

**The Chair** reminded colleagues that in Bangkok, and despite the Twelve Plus Group's reservations, the Executive Committee had approved a proposed amendment to the Rules, requiring an open competition for the appointment of the Secretary General and allowing a single Secretary General no more than three consecutive mandates. The amendment, which had been adopted in Bangkok after a lengthy debate, would be submitted to the Governing Council in Geneva.

This was certainly an improvement, since up until then, the Secretary General could be reappointed indefinitely, and above all, his appointment was not subject to

competition. A reform of the Rules of the Standing Committees had also been adopted, dealing specifically with the reappointment of its Presidents and Vice Presidents. **Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** quoted paragraph 2 of article 3 of the draft amendment and said that the Executive Committee should not be put on the spot and made to decide on the Secretary General's terms of office. This was up to the Governing Council.

**Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)** said the problem was due to the imbalance between a very strong Secretary General and weak governing institutions. The Executive Committee established the Secretary General's employment conditions; it should therefore be responsible for taking into account the Parliamentarians' points of view. Now the proposed amendment of articles 8 and 9 of the Rules of the Standing Committees could weaken them even further by reducing the maximum length of their members' time in office while the Secretary General would remain in office for ten years or more. This was the reason for her two propositions, which would be discussed under item 13 of the agenda. Generally speaking, the Executive Committee and other bodies of the Union should be strengthened.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** believed that the Secretary General should have a deputy.

**The Chair** reminded colleagues that such a proposition would be discussed in Geneva.

**Mr Donald Oliver** agreed with Mrs Clwyd. Furthermore, he thought that when it came to the appointment of the Secretary General, the respective roles of the Executive Committee and the Governing Council were not clear enough. It should be made crystal clear that the Executive Committee merely made a recommendation to the Governing Council, which had the final say as a last resort.

The Executive Committee "established" the Secretary General's "hiring conditions" and "contract", **the Chair** stated, but it was eventually down to the Governing Council to appoint him.

## **MATTERS RELATING TO THE IPU**

### **5. Discussions of the Executive Committee**

**The Chair** commented on the draft paper on reform of the Standing Committees, which had been produced by the Secretary General (EX/258/9-P2, 16 August 2010). The Secretary General, having observed that the Standing Committees and their offices do not work properly, made varied suggestions and specifically proposed that the Committees be allowed to meet between Assemblies. All questions would be considered by the Executive Committee and submitted to the Committees' Chairs and geopolitical Groups. The Chair advised transparency and suggested the proposed reform be circulated to all members of the Twelve Plus Group before the meeting in Geneva so that national delegations had time to think about it. The Twelve Plus Group could therefore come to a consensus that could be defended in front of the Executive Committee.

Considering the budget, **Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden)** wondered how it would be possible for the Standing Committees to meet between Assemblies, especially since other propositions were being made and might imply high costs if adopted. For the sake

of consistency, all propositions and their implications should be discussed at the same time.

**Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)** agreed with the Chair's proposition, which would allow a debate within the Group at the Geneva Assembly. She added that the document did not deal with the problem of the changing composition of delegations, which did not allow smooth work. This matter should be tackled up front.

The Steering Committee agreed to send to all members of the Twelve Plus Group the Secretary General's draft reform paper on the running of the Standing Committees.

**The Chair** then commented on the Secretary General's document entitled Draft Strategic Plan for the IPU: 2010 - 2015. Six of the selected strategic goals seemed to meet general consensus, but the seventh one did not. Again, this was about turning the Inter-parliamentary Union into a treaty-based international organisation and reaching a new agreement between the IPU and the United Nations. This contradicted the conclusions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference of Speakers of Parliament held in July. The Twelve Plus Group would have to make a stand on this matter. A strategy should be defined and maintained but the IPU should not spend too much time reflecting upon itself rather than on its missions, or engage into a costly modernisation without taking the financial aspect into account.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** completely agreed with this and suggested that the Twelve Plus Group create an internal working group which could analyse the document in detail. This would be the only way to reach an enlightened position.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** agreed to this proposition. During the last decade, the IPU had worked primarily to strengthen its role with the United Nations. This should therefore be thought over carefully.

The Steering Committee approved the creation of a working group that would review the 2010-2015 strategy proposed by the Secretary General.

## **6. Conclusion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and**

## **7. International convention on the IPU**

**The Chair** reported that during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Speakers of Parliament, there had often been tensions between the Secretary General and some Speakers, some of them from European Parliaments, when it had come to a draft treaty and new means to be granted to the IPU. As a result, the final statement did not explicitly mention any upcoming treaty or agreement between the United Nations and the IPU, and did not have the phrase "adopted by consensus". This had never been seen before. Despite those hindrances, the Secretary General seemed to be willing to move forward.

**Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)** stressed the ambiguity of the decision taken in Geneva. Many Speakers of Parliaments had not wanted to take positions since they considered it was up to the IPU bodies to decide on the matter. Moreover a few of them, although they had not supported the idea of an international treaty, and more generally, the Secretary General's vision of the IPU's future, had not thought that they had the authority to decide on behalf of their Parliaments. The Twelve Plus Group was

responsible for ensuring that the Secretary General did not go it alone and that decisions made by the Union agreed to all geopolitical Groups' wishes.

**The Chair** stated that it would indeed be difficult to ignore the Speakers of Parliaments' reservations.

**Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)** mentioned again the proposed strategy for 2010-2015 and regretted that geopolitical Groups had so little time to come up with counter-propositions when presented with strategically crucial documents. The decision-taking process had to be reviewed.

Generally speaking, the Secretary General had not realised that not everyone approved his chosen path. She said she supported the strengthening of the IPU's powers, but not the way the Secretary General wanted to.

**Mr Krister Örnfjäder (Sweden)** said that the Swedish Parliament wondered mostly about the status of the current IPU members who would refuse to ratify the treaty, if there was ever one. Would they be considered as second rate countries? This matter must be made clear before any further action. It should also be established whether a treaty would be an appropriate solution.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** said that if the Conference had accepted this, the IPU would have had a hard time not to follow through. As far as he was concerned, the Canadian Parliament had always been against a treaty, and nothing had changed.

**The Chair** insisted that the position of the Speakers' Conference could not be ignored, but that the IPU-UN relations could be discussed in order to improve them other than through a treaty. The matter should be discussed in Geneva within the Twelve Plus Group, stressing the Speakers' opinions and the Secretary General's propositions, so that the Group could find common ground.

**Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)** said that one should bear in mind that the Twelve Plus Group had been the only one to oppose an IPU treaty in Geneva as well as at the Speakers' Conference. The Group had to find common ground but also had to carry on talks with other geopolitical groups to explain its position, avoid becoming a minority and ending up with many European countries refusing to sign the treaty and deciding to leave the IPU rather than supporting it financially.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** agreed with this. She had already taken part in discussions on this matter, and had never seen a consensus. Each national delegation could approve paragraph 34 of the 3rd Conference's final statement, which dealt with strengthening cooperation between the IPU and the UN, but nothing else remained of the original draft. There was no consensus in favour of the Secretary General's proposition. To not stop him now would cause further trouble down the line – and only the 12+ Group could put the breaks on the process

**The Chair** stated that the European Speakers of Parliament had not been the only ones to stand against the treaty. The United Arab Emirates had spoken on behalf of the Arab Group to reject the principle of an IPU treaty, as well as Japan, India and some South American and Caribbean countries. Opinions therefore differed greatly, and the Twelve Plus Group was not isolated. But its members at least had to agree on a method or direction.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** stressed that the IPU acted exemplarily in several ways: for instance, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, which she had presided, did some impressive work. But national parliaments never mentioned IPU resolutions and the Secretariat of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was faced with tremendous difficulties. Its administration manager was about to retire and it was unknown whether she would be suitably replaced. If she was not, the Committee would have a hard time carrying on with its activities. The Secretary General should examine recommendations for the development of the activities of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians rather than pursuing projects that did not meet consensus within the Union.

**The Chair** approved this. There were indeed centres of excellence within the IPU that were often consulted by the UN, such as the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians or activities for gender equalities in politics. In the future, the IPU should strengthen these fields and let the public and the international press know more about them.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** noted that item 21 of the IPU draft strategy would strengthen the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and increase the resources allocated to it.

## **8. Preparation of the 123<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly in Geneva**

**The Chair** reminded colleagues that the 123<sup>rd</sup> Assembly would be held in Geneva from the 4 to 6 October 2010. The Executive Committee would meet two days earlier. He mentioned the panel discussions on matters on the Agenda of the 124<sup>th</sup> Assembly, reminded colleagues of their topics and reported that two co-rapporteurs came from the Twelve Plus Group. Mrs Ferrier (Netherlands) on Committee II and Mr Destexhe (Belgium) on Committee III. A special meeting on "Migration and Development" would also be held on Tuesday, 5 October 2010. So far, no emergency item had been suggested.

## **9. Positions to be filled**

**The Chair** informed colleagues that there would be a vacancy for the Twelve Plus Group on the Executive Committee since Mr Geert Versnick's office had ended. He had left the Belgian Parliament in June and was currently replaced by Mr de Donnea until the end of the Assembly in October. Currently the four Twelve Plus representatives on the Executive Committee were Mrs Stump, Mr de Donnea up until October, Mr Örnfjäder and himself.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** said that he would apply for the position. Not only should candidates be well familiar with the inner workings of the IPU, but also Canada would host the Assembly in autumn 2012.

## **10. Budget**

**The Chair** stated that on top of the 2011 draft budget, the Executive Committee would be presented with a document on the budget review for 2010 and quite unusually, with a document entitled "Budget Review for 2011" with propositions to improve the organisation of the Secretariat General. Its set up would involve additional expenses which had not been integrated into the 2011 draft budget.



The budget review for 2010 showed additional expenses that had not been planned in the original draft. Other additional expenses were also revealed on top of the ones announced at the 122<sup>nd</sup> Assembly. The cost of additional expenses was covered by savings of the same amount, but some of them were nonetheless surprising, such as 60,000 Swiss Francs required by the UN for security services during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

The 2011 draft budget might seem satisfactory, but a more detailed analysis revealed that it was in fact deceptive: the request for a strong moderation of the evolution of expenses, which had been put forward during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Speakers of Parliament, seemed to have been taken into account for 2011, but the following years' projections revealed that this moderation would only be temporary.

The proposed budget for 2011 had decreased by 2.6% compared to the 2010 budget, while membership contributions had gone up by 1.3%. Contributions had actually only increased by 1%, considering the extra revenue registered in 2010. A 1% increase might be preferable to a 3% one, as observed on average for the past few years; but it remained higher than many national parliaments' budget growth, some of them even having not increased at all.

It was also surprising that members' contributions should go up when the Union budget was going down. This aimed to compensate the 13% decrease in voluntary contributions expected in 2011. This was due to the upcoming expiration of multiannual agreements signed with several major donors. In a way, the IPU members were suffering the consequences of the Secretariat's excessive optimism regarding voluntary contributions, while the Executive Committee had regularly expressed concern over related revenue projections possibly being unrealistic.

Many Parliaments had wished to reject the zero contributions growth in order to avoid redundancies, even though several members of the Executive Committee had stressed that it was unsafe to fund permanent employment thanks to voluntary contributions, which were inherently unpredictable.

The document for the 2011 budget review was set up according to a method that was at the very least questionable: propositions of additional expenses were put forward while the budget had not yet been adopted. This might be due to an effort to artificially restrict expenses on the 2011 budget. Some extra expenses were in principle legitimate, such as the creation of a Deputy Secretary position, but their schedule was wrong, unless the related costs were to be met by saving on other staff costs.

Finally, projections for 2012 were worrying: the IPU's general budget would increase by 11.3% and members' contributions by 3.7% while many national Parliaments were foreseeing no-growth budgets for the next two years. This again showed that the projected budget moderation for 2011 was artificial, since it had been created by postponing expenses till 2012, not by genuinely trying to save on programmes. One could also wonder whether it was realistic to foresee an increase of expected revenue by a third regarding voluntary contributions.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** requested details on the appointment of the future Director General, its resulting expenses and that of appointing a Deputy. Was that appointment

part of the current Secretary General's succeeding strategy? Would the appointment follow an open competition advertised in the international press or would internal promotion be favoured?

**The Chair** replied that nothing had been decided so far. He did not think personally that the title of Director General was the best. The IPU needed a "Deputy Secretary General", who would have authority to take the necessary decision whenever the Secretary General was travelling, which happened very frequently. Should promotion within the IPU or an external appointment be favoured? The matter would be debated by the Executive Committee. They also would have to approve the related expenses, which had not been scheduled in the 2011 budget.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** noted that the Twelve Plus Group could advise the Executive Committee that a Deputy Secretary General rather than a Director General should be appointed, and mentioned specifically as such in the job description. Candidates from the Secretariat would obviously be allowed to apply internally, but recruitment should be open, which was why a large open competition was called for.

**The Chair** stated that it was down to the Executive Committee to decide which recruitment mode, what professional contract and what additional expenses would be in order.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** asked whether the Secretary General's recently renewed contract included preparation for his succession. **The Chair** replied that it did not. The Secretary General would prefer that his future Deputy was appointed as Director General, therefore seemingly reducing him to an administrative position. This might mean that he hoped to appoint him or her himself, but it would be down to the Executive Committee to decide, following an open procedure.

**Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)** asked details about the confusing draft flowchart which featured in the meeting's files. She wondered about the duties of some IPU collaborators and wanted to know the names of the people holding the various positions. **The Chair** recalled the names of the current Directors and added that a person would be recruited to fill the position of Head of Communication Division. **Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** asked what would become of the Press Relations Service. **The Chair** replied that it would be integrated into the Communication Division.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** asked whether anything had been heard about the United States possibly coming back to the IPU and what that would mean for the IPU offices in New York. Also, would a specific budget document be drafted for these offices' expenses?

**The Chair** stated that the US Senate had agreed in principle to the US' reinstatement. The House of Representatives should decide by the end of the year. As for the expenses of the IPU offices in New York, they were part of the expenses for external relations.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** asked whether the IPU's New York offices were really efficient. **The Chair** stressed that the main role of these offices was to liaise between the UN and the IPU, not to work towards the reinstatement of the United States. If, according to everyone's wish, the United States were to join the IPU again,

their membership fee would bring the Union new resources, the use of which would have to be discussed. Since other members had to increase their contributions to compensate for the United States leaving, it would be appropriate that they should – at least partly – benefit from this major contributor’s reinstatement.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** asked what was meant by the American Senate “agreeing in principle”. **The Chair** explained that the Senate had adopted a specific bill. Should the House of Representatives reject the proposition, the Senate would have to discuss it again. However, several things looked hopeful.

**Mr Kenneth Courtenay (Secretariat of the Twelve Plus Group)** added that previous American administrations had always stumbled upon the question of funding. However, the last Congress rejection had been by a small majority. The political changes that had taken place in the US since then could well alter the situation, but even if the Congress came back to the IPU, which they were welcome to do, how much American Parliamentarians would take part in the Union activities remained unknown and would depend greatly on the dates of statutory assemblies.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** noted that no increase of the resources allocated to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was mentioned in the 2011 budget. **The Chair** explained that it had been mentioned in principle in the Union draft strategy but not yet in the budget. **Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** deplored the fact that every year an increase of this Committee’s resources was announced but never actually happened. **The Chair** suggested that the Executive Committee be advised to redistribute resources in favour of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** thought that the 13% decrease in voluntary contributions should not be so stressed as the ways of getting Parliamentarians more involved in the Committees’ work.

**The Chair** said he wished that Parliamentarians were not informed afterwards that any additional programme was being set up. The Executive Committee should preferably decide on projects beforehand and approve them if needed. Donation campaigns for countries affected by disasters showed that not informing potential contributors on how their money would be used could act as a deterrent. Therefore, thanks to structured projects, large funds were able to be quickly collected for emergency relief in Haiti. The same had not gone for Pakistan, where no detailed programme had been set up.

**Mrs Marija Lugaric (Croatia)** noted that the implementation of the Resolution on Youth Participation in Democracy did not feature in the 2010-2015 strategic plan. What was the point of voting such resolutions if the IPU itself did not keep them as part of its strategic goals?

**The Chair** said that it would be up to the Executive Committee to mention those matters at their next meeting.

## **11. IPU Members**

Regarding the US membership, **the Chair** reminded that the document, which had been voted by the Senate, was currently pending at the House of Representatives.

Furthermore, Montenegro had not paid contributions for at least two years and could be suspended in 2011. **Mrs Marija Lugaric (Croatia)** explained that she had already discussed this matter with the Parliament Speaker of the country – whose interest in the IPU was not at stake – and that she would contact him again to find a solution before the Assembly in Geneva.

## **12. Specific IPU meetings since the 122<sup>nd</sup> Assembly**

**The Chair** went over the meetings held since Bangkok.

## **13. IPU Matters**

*- Propositions by Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)*

**The Chair** presented two propositions mailed to him by Mrs Doris Stump: to create a Rules Committee within the IPU, similar to what the Parliamentary Assembly did at the European Council; and for the Executive Committee to meet more often, and between Assemblies.

**Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland)** explained that her propositions came from her experience as a member of the Executive Committee, but also expressed the feeling, which had been mentioned during the current meeting, that the Secretary General had such power within the IPU that everyone went along with him and granted his every wish. To put an end to that situation, Parliamentarians should be more involved. The rules submitted at Assemblies were not often the result of in-depth work, and the Secretary General drafted them on his own. By contrast, PACE had a Committee on Rules of Procedure that examined suggestions before they were submitted at the Assembly. Also, the only way to strengthen the Executive Committee was for it to meet more often - at least once more between Assemblies. That way, it would be better informed, could ask questions and come up with new propositions.

**The Chair** asked whether a Rules Committee might not be redundant, considering the Executive Committee already had authority on all regulations matters. Even so, it would be interesting for the Executive Committee to meet more often and be more involved in such matters. However, this would be on two conditions: these meetings should be held in Geneva to avoid the extra cost of IPU staff travel, but also members of the Executive Committee, including delegates from far away countries, should be able to fund their own trip to Geneva.

**Mr Donald Oliver** suggested that the Executive Committee meet a day before each Assembly.

**The Chair** replied that this had been planned for the 123<sup>rd</sup> Assembly. **Mrs Doris Stump** thought this partly fixed the problem, but that with only two meetings a year, it was easy to lose track of the discussions. More frequent meetings would allow the Executive Committee to have more in-depth debates. A three, rather than two-day meeting before Assemblies would not be enough. Without going that extra mile, including financially, the Executive Committee could not fulfil its role. **The Chair** and **Mr Donald Oliver** agreed with this and suggested that the 12+ Group ask for at least one more meeting a year. To keep in line with financial difficulties and the IPU's wish to find new ways of communicating with its members, **Mr Krister Örnfjäder** suggested organising Executive Committee meetings over the Internet.

The Steering Committee agreed to submit all those propositions to the Executive Committee.

**The Chair** stressed that the strengthening of the powers of the Executive Committee should be demanded most firmly. Good governance rules applying to national Parliaments should also apply to the IPU.

**Mrs Doris Stump** suggested that the idea of a Committee on Rules be discussed within the Executive Committee "Bureau" set up by the six Vice Presidents. **The Chair** added that the Bureau itself could form the Committee on Rules.

*- Committee on Middle East Questions*

**The Chair** reported that the Committee on Middle East Questions would receive a note from the Secretariat regarding its composition and running. The note stressed the level of non-attendance within the Committee and the uneven geographical distribution of the six permanent and six deputy positions. Even if it should be noted that appointments were made on a personal basis, three out of five active members belonged to the Twelve Plus Group and two to the Asia Pacific Group, while the four other groups were not represented and women remained underrepresented, as there was only one.

The document went through possible solutions: to set aside at least one seat for each geopolitical group; to impose equal gender representation on groups with more than one representative; to consider other criteria of participation, for instance to represent Israel, Palestine or other countries directly affected by the conflict.

Such propositions called for two comments: on one hand, the Twelve Plus Group might lose seats on the Committee; on the other hand, would setting seats aside for geopolitical groups that were not directly interested in the Committee be the best way to improve its running?

Regarding the Committee's activities, the note recalled: that the Committee had been able since 2009 to conduct separate discussions with the distinct parties; that they had wished to go on another mission in the area and had included Gaza in the programme; that the Palestinians had asked for a Parliamentary conference about the conflict.

What could the Twelve Plus Group's position be on those propositions? Increasing the number of Committee members could be considered rather than reducing that of European representatives, who were more concerned by the Middle East question than other geographical zones.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** spoke as President of the Committee on Middle East Questions and said that she had not known about this note. She wished the person who had drafted it had discussed it with her beforehand. She said that only one person ran the Secretariat of the Committee and that several sessions had had to be cancelled, since it had been impossible for the Palestinians and Israelis to meet in the same room at the same time. Members of the Committee had been somewhat frustrated by this. At the last meeting, conciliation experts had been asked to suggest working methods for the body. Those suggestions had been submitted to the IPU Secretary General. The President would meet him in London the following week to discuss this. There was no point in appointing people on this Committee who had no interest in the Middle East.

The Committee on Middle East Questions had obviously not been able to work. Was it relevant to maintain it if it did not have the necessary financial and human resources? The President proposed to inform the Twelve Plus Group of Mrs Clwyd's correspondence with the Secretary General about this; she doubted the note mentioned earlier actually reflected the situation.

**The Chair** thought that the activities and future of the Committee on Middle East Questions could be discussed under the "Any other business" item at the Executive Committee meeting. *(Approval)*

## **TWELVE PLUS MATTERS**

### **14. Programme of activities and meetings for the 123<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly in Geneva**

**The Chair** drew attention to the schedule of meetings at the 123<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly and added that there would be a reception at the Musée Ariana on 4 October from 7 to 9 pm.

### **15. Status of one Group member regarding payment of contribution**

**The Chair** reported that Albania had still not paid their contribution arrears. They would therefore have to be considered as an observer amongst the Group. **Mrs Marija Lugaric (Croatia)** explained that she had been unable to contact Albanian Parliamentarians. **The Chair** said that he would speak directly with them in Geneva.

### **16. Twelve Plus Group Presidency – Open Competition**

**The Chair** reminded the Committee that Mr John Austin's successor as President of the Twelve Plus Group would be elected in Geneva. As the Group President ad interim, he had written to all members in June to inform them of the upcoming election and called upon them to apply as candidates. Applications should consist of a letter of intent and a *curriculum vitae* and could be submitted up until the beginning of the October session.

As he had decided to apply himself, he wanted voting to be supervised by his British colleagues. *(Approval)*

The Steering Committee set the date for the election on Wednesday 6 October 2010.

### **17. Financial matters**

**Mr Kenneth Courtenay (Secretariat of the Twelve Plus Group)** presented the Group's balance sheet on 30 June 2010. Revenue amounted to £33,649 and expenses to £21,149, leaving a surplus of £12,499. Even though the balance sheet did not include the cost of the current meeting or meetings that would be held around Geneva, there should still be a surplus at the end of the year, which would put reserves at more than £70,000. The Group's financial situation was therefore a lot healthier than six years ago.

In Geneva, membership contributions should be determined for the year to come, possible payment arrears should be acknowledged and the corresponding countries should be contacted about their intentions. The British team would transfer finances to the new Presidency as quickly as possible as well as updated files. Conversions would be made according to the exchange rate as of early October.

**The Chair** thanked Mr Kenneth Courtenay for his excellent work. Considering the satisfactory financial situation, the next Presidency could suggest that contributions be maintained at their current level, with no extra charge for extraordinary missions.

### **18. Twelve Plus Matters**

**The Chair** said that the new Presidency, from whichever country it may be, would have to set the date for a Steering Committee meeting in early March, before the Assembly in Panama.

**Mr Donald Oliver (Canada)** reported that Canada was working very hard to prepare for the 127<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly to be held in Quebec in October 2012. They were planning to ask former US President Mr Bill Clinton to make a keynote speech. He hoped this would encourage American Parliamentarians to travel to Quebec for the Assembly.

**The Chair** welcomed the initiative, which would maybe prompt the US to come back to the IPU.

**Mrs Ann Clwyd (United Kingdom)** reminded colleagues that a regional seminar would be held in London for European Parliaments, on the subject of “Youth Participation in Democracy”.

**Mrs Marija Lugaric (Croatia)** suggested that such events should not be held in December, when budget discussions were traditionally held. If other regional seminars were to be organised at a similar time in the future, she asked whether they could be scheduled on another date.

**The Chair** would pass the comment on to the Secretariat and the Executive Committee. He then noted that the agenda had been covered and thanked colleagues for their contributions.

*The meeting ended at 12:15 pm.*

## Travel Costs

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>ASSOCIATION</b>    | Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)                                       |
| <b>ACTIVITY</b>       | Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union |
| <b>DESTINATION</b>    | Paris, France   |
| <b>DATES</b>          | September 3, 2010   |
| <b>DELEGATION</b>     |   |
| SENATE                | The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C.   |
| HOUSE OF COMMONS      |   |
| STAFF                 | Mr. Joseph Jackson, Advisor   |
| <b>TRANSPORTATION</b> | <b>\$7,838.63</b>   |
| <b>ACCOMMODATION</b>  | <b>\$1,249.04</b>   |
| <b>HOSPITALITY</b>    |   |
| <b>PER DIEMS</b>      | <b>\$ 407.15</b>  |
| <b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b> | <b>\$ 65.00</b>   |
| <b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>  |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>\$9,559.82</b>   |