

Canadian Group  
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien  
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation at the Annual  
Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations**

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

**New York, New York, United States of America  
November 19-20, 2014**

# Report

## 1. Overview

From the 19th to the 20th of November 2014, a delegation from the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) travelled to New York to attend the IPU's annual parliamentary hearing at the headquarters of the United Nations (UN). The delegation was led by the **Honourable Dennis Dawson** who is an executive member of the IPU as well as a member of the IPU advisory committee on Unions affairs. He was the only representative from the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The delegation participated in the various panel sessions and events. Among other things, the hearing provided an important opportunity for parliamentarians to engage in dialogue and exchange views and experiences with one another, and to hear from the UN management team. This report provides an overview of the IPU-UN parliamentary hearing.

## 2. Background

The IPU is the international organization of parliaments of sovereign states. It was established in 1889, is “the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue,” and “works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy.”<sup>1</sup> The IPU “supports the efforts of and works in close co-operation with the United Nations, whose objectives it shares.”<sup>2</sup>

The IPU's annual parliamentary hearing brings parliamentarians to the UN headquarters in New York “for an interactive discussion with high-ranking UN officials, representatives of [UN] Member States and experts drawn from think tanks and civil society organizations.”<sup>3</sup>

As a joint event of the IPU and UN, the hearing reflects a commitment by the UN to hear the views of parliamentarians with regards to urgent issues facing policy-makers and legislators around the world and on the key issues on the UN agenda. The importance of the annual hearing to the ongoing work of the IPU and its engagement with the UN system and activities was underlined in the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in June 2012, which:

- Recalled its 2010 resolution deciding “to pursue a more systematic engagement with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in organizing and integrating a parliamentary component of and contribution to major United Nations deliberative processes and the review of international commitments”; and

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<sup>1</sup> IPU, “Overview.” See <http://www.ipu.org/english/whatipu.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> IPU, “Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations,” New York, UN Headquarters, 6-7 December 2012. See <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga12.htm>.

- Called for “the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations to be more closely linked to major United Nations processes, including the preparation of global conferences, so as to help to inform such deliberations from a parliamentary perspective.”<sup>4</sup>

The conclusions of the hearing are circulated to the wider UN community as well as to all national parliaments.<sup>5</sup>

The parliamentary hearing was attended by some 180 parliamentarians, and staff, from 58 countries as well as several regional parliaments.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Programme of the Parliamentary Hearing

The main theme of the hearing that took place in New York the 19th and the 20th of November 2014 was: *Ensuring a people-centred approach to the new SDGs: a shared responsibility*.

The key questions that were explored during the event included:

- What are the implications of the rights-based approach for the new SDGs as a universal agenda?
  - How can all countries adopt the rights-based approach taking into account different stages of development, from the poorest to the most affluent societies?
  - What regulations are needed to ensure that markets work for the people?
- What policies can countries at all stages of development implement to support essential safety nets?
- How can all people be more directly involved in monitoring policy results and providing feedback?
- What should be the attitude of the international community to support legal reforms that does not result in conditionality?

The full programme, which includes details on the themes and case studies explored during the hearing, and the complete list of panelists, may be found online.<sup>7</sup>

### 4. Summary of Event and Canadian Participation

The session 1 began with a joint meeting with the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Sam Kutesa and the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Saber Chowdhury on the draft Sustainable Goals.

It was followed by a panel on *putting people first: the right to development for all* with speaker Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015

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<sup>4</sup>United Nations General Assembly, “Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union,” A/RES/66/261, 7 June 2012, paragraph 7, other relevant documents and resolutions that provide the framework for the IPU’s cooperation with the UN may be accessed at <http://www.ipu.org/un-e/un-docs.htm#resolutions>.

<sup>5</sup> IPU, “Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations,” New York, UN Headquarters, 6-7 December 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Note: a final and complete list of participants will be provided in the summary document of the IPU-UN hearing that is prepared by the IPU and posted on <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga12.htm>. That summary document was not yet available at the time of writing.

<sup>7</sup> IPU, “Provisional Programme,” 19 November 2014.

Development Planning, for the United Nations. After, we had information on how United Nations for development works. This special segment was intended to help MPs familiarize with the development work of the United Nations at both political and operational levels. It had provided an overview of the UN inter-governmental structure as well as of UN programme work within countries. It was featured in particular the Economic and Social Council as a central decision-making and coordination body, explaining its methods of work and overall role within the larger UN machinery. The work of the UN Development Group and of the UN system at the country level was also presented.

Session 2 talked about the regulations and safeguards of the markets. More broadly, governments have a responsibility to take pro-active measures against unemployment and other social ills that undermine development progress. Austerity policies driven by a concern with budget deficits may meet the requirements of financial markets but also damage the real economy on which people depend. In any case, where austerity is necessary it should be applied fairly and with the needs of the most vulnerable in mind. As agencies like the ILO have argued, a social protection floor (basic income security, basic health care etc.) is possible in every country at any stage of development.

Session 3 talked about the development impacts and ways the reverse the tide regarding the Inequality and discrimination. Violence and discrimination against women, including the denial of access to and rights over land, inheritance and property for women is another illustration of this pernicious problem. This kind of discrimination often springs from cultural norms, values and traditions with deep roots in the social fabric of a country. The immediate result is that women are prevented from starting or developing an income generating activity that would help provide for themselves and their families. This in turns leads to lower productivity and revenue. For the last session, we discuss My World platform: a dynamic tool for MP's-constituents interaction. There was finally a meeting of the IPU special Committee on the United Nations to prepare the next conferences.

**The Honourable Senator Dennis Dawson** participated at the preliminary meeting of the presidents and at the debates in the Assembly. He also participated at the Assembly of the IPU Committee on the United Nations.

In addition to the parliamentary hearings, **The Honorable Senator Dennis Dawson** also participated in a joint meeting of the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, the President of the General Assembly, and the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Saber Chowdhury to prepare the Meeting of the Speakers and Presidents of Parliaments to be held in New York at the end of August (Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament , 31 August - 2 September 2015).On Friday ,the 21 of November, he also participated at the special meeting of the IPU Committee on the United Nations .This particular meeting was held in preparation of the 132<sup>nd</sup> IPU annual meeting to be held in Hanoi from the 28nd of March to the 1 of April 2015.

While he was the only parliamentary representative from Canada at the Parliamentary Hearing it is important to note that there were 6 Canadians Presenters including two former members of parliament.

A detailed summary report of the parliamentary hearing will be produced by the IPU and circulated to the UN General Assembly. It will be posted on-line at: <http://www.ipu.org/Splz-e/unga14.htm>.

Respectfully submitted,

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

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations
<b>DESTINATION</b>	New York, New York, United States of America
<b>DATES</b>	November 19-20, 2014
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
<b>SENATE</b>	Hon. Dennis Dawson
<b>HOUSE OF COMMONS</b>	
<b>STAFF</b>	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$ 936.69
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$ 1,132.26
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$ 329.24
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 2,398.19