

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Delegation
of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Group
to the
114th Assembly and Related Meetings
Nairobi, Kenya
May 7-12, 2006**

Report

1. Background

The IPU is the international organization of Parliaments of sovereign states. It was established in 1889. The Union is the focal point for world-wide 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.

The IPU supports the efforts of the United Nations, whose objectives it shares, and works in close cooperation with it. It also cooperates with regional inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals.

More than 145 national parliaments are members of the IPU. Seven regional parliamentary assemblies are associate members. Most members are affiliated to one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU. ⁽¹⁾

2. Agenda for the 114th IPU Assembly

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on political issues. Twice a year it brings together parliamentarians to study international problems and make recommendations for action. The agenda for the 114th IPU Assembly, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya between 7 and 12 May 2006, addressed the following items:

- General Debate: The political, economic and social situation in the world with the overall theme of Promoting democracy and helping to build democratic institutions;
- First Standing Committee: The role of parliaments in strengthening the control of trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition;
- Second Standing Committee: The role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment;
- Third Standing Committee: How parliaments can and must promote effective ways of combating violence against women in all fields; and

- Emergency Item: The need for urgent food relief in order to combat drought-induced famine and poverty in Africa, for the world's most industrialized nations to speed up aid to the continent and for particular efforts to be made to reach desperate and poor populations.

A detailed report on the 114th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings is available online.⁽²⁾

3. The Canadian Delegation

Of the 1,066 delegates who attended the 114th IPU Assembly, 602 were members of national parliaments, of which 170 were women (28.2%) and five were Canadian parliamentarians. These included, from the Senate of Canada:

The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Leader of the delegation
The Honourable Raynell Andreychuck
The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, P.C.
The Honourable Joan Fraser
The Honourable Mac Harb

4. Contributions made by the Canadian Delegation to the 114th IPU Assembly

Canadian delegates were active and engaged participants in all Assembly and Standing Committee activities held during and in association with the 114th IPU Assembly.⁽³⁾

During the General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world, **Senator Oliver** focused on the overall theme of Promoting democracy and helping to build democratic institutions. He said:

That democracy enjoyed a near universal success. The Freedom House organization in the United States had calculated that 122 out of 192 countries were electoral democracies. The trend towards democracy was on the rise and nations of diverse cultures and histories were choosing it. However, there was a danger that it would be taken for granted. It was necessary to promote it both in transition countries and where it was well-established. He noted IPU's Universal Declaration on Democracy that stated that all components of society must be represented and play an effective role in democratic processes.

There was no impediment to democracy in Canada and institutions generally functioned well but there were signs that all was not well. Turnout in the federal elections had fallen from 75 per cent in the mid-1980s to a figure in the low sixties. Fewer people were joining political parties because they preferred demonstrations, boycotts and petitions which were easy to organize on the Internet. Such ad hoc activity could not provide an ongoing link between parliament and people.

He had been moved by President Kibaki's remarks on the need to enhance parliamentary capacity and transparency in public affairs. Canada had recently passed comprehensive legislation on those matters that would ensure greater transparency of political funding. Regarding conflict of interest, the laws would create an ethics commissioner. Measures on the legislation of lobbyists had been toughened with greater powers of investigation and enforcement.

A parliamentary budgetary authority would undertake objective analysis of spending and of the costs of proposals to ensure truth in budgeting. A uniform process to ensure that public appointments were made on merit had been established. The process of government procurement had been reformed, as had government policy and advertising procedures. Laws had been passed to protect whistle-blowers by ensuring access to legal counsel and offering a reward of CD\$ one thousand to public service employees who exposed malpractice. Auditing procedures had been enhanced and a post of director of public prosecutions was being created.

Senator Harb attended meetings of the First Standing Committee (Peace and International Security). During the debate on “The role of parliaments in strengthening the control of trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition” he said:

That the present meeting and the forthcoming United Nations Small Arms Review Conference were particularly important in the global fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW). The First Standing Committee should ensure that the resolutions it adopted responded effectively to the needs of its members, and that all members were encouraged to implement those resolutions at the national level. Parliamentarians had a crucial role to play in the national implementation of measures adopted at the international level. His delegation wished to see the establishment of an ad hoc group of countries to meet twice a year, in order to keep the fight against trafficking in SALW high on the international agenda.

Senator Harb and **Senator Oliver** attended meetings of the Second Standing Committee (Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade). During the debate on “The role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment” **Senator Oliver** said:

That the global environment on which humans depended had been placed under unprecedented stress for decades. The world’s population would rise by several billion people and it was hoped that the quality of life would follow suit. The current quality of life was largely dependent on energy, particularly fossil fuels and various natural resources – a trend likely to continue. Management of the environment and its resources would therefore become increasingly important. Canada relied on a number of environmental indices to check its performance in the areas of biodiversity, air quality, climate change and water policy. Various methods of enforcement were used. Canada had a mixed record on the environment. Most trends since the 1970s had been positive but had either levelled off or worsened in the past decade. One of parliament’s main tasks consisted therefore in holding government to account regarding its environmental commitments. The question remained: could Canada proactively head off those challenges or would it wait and see how things materialized?

Senator Harb also served as a member of the Drafting Committee for the Second Standing Committee. In this context he was elected as its Chair and presided over a daylong meeting on 10 May.

Senator Andreychuck attended meetings of the Third Standing Committee (Democracy and Human Rights). During the debate on “How parliaments can and must promote effective ways of combating violence against women in all fields” she said:

That, using the procedures and mechanisms at their disposal, parliamentarians should play a role in identifying means of ensuring that signatories complied with their obligations under the instruments listed in the report, not least in view of the infrequency with which governments took remedial action to address any failure of implementation brought to their attention by the relevant United Nations treaty bodies. No more than 100 countries had ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, under which VAW was in the categories of genocide and crimes against humanity. Much therefore remained to be done to eliminate all systematic VAW in situations of conflict. Similarly, few women in war-torn areas were aware of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, which, *inter alia*, urged the incorporation of a gender perspective into peace-building operations. Hence, parliamentarians still also had much left to do in their role as educators. Moreover, although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been in existence for some 25 years, it was only recently that countries such as her own had begun to ensure that their national legislation conformed with its provisions. Being a matter of human rights, women’s issues should not be addressed in isolation. Lastly, she said that the revised preliminary draft resolution would be improved by the proposed amendments, which she therefore hoped would be taken into consideration.

5. Participation by Canadians in Related Meeting and Other Activities

Concurrent with Standing Committee activities associated with the 114th IPU Assembly were the meetings of a number of related committees and working groups. This section identifies those meetings that were attended by Canadian delegates. In instances where key activities are not reported in the IPU's official report on the 114th IPU Assembly, further details are provided below.

(a) The IPU Executive Committee

In accordance with the Union's Statutes, this 17-member body oversees the administration of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and provides advice to the Governing Council. The Executive Committee advises the Council on matters relating to affiliation to the Union, fixes the date and place of Council sessions and establishes the provisional agenda, recommends to the Council the agenda of the Assembly, taking into account proposals made by the Union's geopolitical and national groups. It also proposes to the Council the annual work program and budget of the Union. The Executive Committee controls the administration of the Secretariat as well its activities in the execution of the decisions taken by the Assembly and the Council.

Senator Fraser, in her capacity as President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, attended meetings of the IPU Executive Committee on 4 and 5 May.

(b) The IPU Governing Council

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. A number of committees and working groups are subordinated to it and report to the Council on their work. All members of the Canadian delegation attended at least one of the two meetings of the Governing Council that were held on 8 and 12 May.

The most important decision of consequence to the Canadian IPU delegation occurred on 12 May, when the Governing Council elected **Senator Carstairs** as a titular member to the IPU's Committee for the Human Rights of Parliamentarians for a five-year term, ending April 2011.

(c) Meeting and Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians

Since 1986, meetings of women parliamentarians have been held on the eve of IPU Assemblies, to discuss strategies and perspectives. In April 1990, the role, objectives and working methods of the Meetings of Women Parliamentarians were formally established and the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, a permanent structure, was established to coordinate its activities and ensure continuity.

Meetings of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians were held on 7, 11 and 12 May. As its outgoing President, **Senator Fraser** chaired the meeting on 7 May.

The Meeting of Women Parliamentarians was held on 7 May. In her capacity as the Coordinating Committee's outgoing President, **Senator Fraser** addressed the Meeting. She said:

That it had been an honour for her to work with the IPU for so many years. Mrs. Allende, who unfortunately could not attend the Meeting, should have presented the report. She invited her colleagues to refer to the written report.

She recalled the important work conducted by the Coordinating Committee at the 112th Assembly in Manila in April 2005. The Committee had noted that much progress had been made and that the major role played by women at that Assembly was appreciated and acknowledged.

In Manila, when assessing the work of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, members of the Committee had felt that there was a need to focus future work on the question of women in politics. It had therefore been decided to ensure that the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians debate a subject linked to the promotion of women in politics and to hold a debate in Kenya on special measures to promote women in politics.

In Geneva in October 2005, the Committee had discussed the follow-up to the Manila Meeting and preparations for the Nairobi Meeting. It had noted with pleasure that the proportion of female delegates at the IPU meetings had continued to rise and had reached a record of 32.5 percent. It had been suggested that members of the Committee stay in touch between sessions; the IPU Secretariat would help in particular by producing a bi-monthly newsletter on gender activities being undertaken at the IPU.

She informed the Meeting that she had sent a letter to the IPU President proposing that the term of the members of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, currently limited to two years, be extended. She hoped that this suggestion would be taken up by the newly elected Coordinating Committee.

She also noted that the Coordinating Committee, at its session held that morning, had discussed modalities for the debate under item 4 of the agenda: Contribution of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians to the 114th Assembly of the IPU. Two working groups would discuss the item under consideration by the Assembly's Second Standing Committee, The role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment.

Senator Fraser also provided a report on certain specialized IPU meetings and initiatives. She noted that:

The IPU and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women had organized in New York, on the occasion of the 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, a parliamentary event entitled Gender Equality: Making a difference through Parliament. One hundred and eighty participants from 64 countries attended the meeting, which had been held on 1 March 2006. The parliamentary event, together with the IPU brochure on Women Elected in 2005, had been widely commented on in the media. The meeting had been most enlightening and had sparked a lively discussion on mechanisms to promote women in politics and on parliamentary mechanisms aimed at promoting gender

issues. The event was evidence of the fruitful cooperation established between the IPU and the United Nations, in particular the Division for the Advancement of Women.

She had attended a regional seminar for parliaments of the Asia-Pacific region on the protection of children. This seminar had been organised by the IPU and UNICEF and hosted by the National Assembly of Viet Nam. The debates had focused on parliamentary mechanisms for child protection as well as on specific child protection issues, including child trafficking.

A regional conference on female genital mutilation (FGM) had been organised by the National Assembly of Senegal and the African Parliamentary Union, in cooperation with the IPU and UNICEF. Delegates from more than 20 countries where FGM is practiced attended the meeting, which had resulted in the adoption of a concrete parliamentary plan of action which now needed to be implemented. More information on all these specialised meetings can be found on the IPU website.

Lastly, she thanked the staff of the IPU Programme for Partnership between men and women for their efficiency: thanks to their hard work there was now a World Directory of Parliamentary Bodies on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, which was a mine of information.

(d) The Gender Partnership Group

In 1997, the IPU established, as a sub-committee of its Executive Committee, a Gender Partnership Group composed of two men and two women to ensure that the interests and visions of men and women are taken into account equally in all IPU activities and decisions. **Senator Fraser** attended a meeting of this Group on 5 May.

(e) The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

In 1976, the IPU adopted a "Procedure for the examination and treatment of communications concerning violations of the human rights of parliamentarians," applicable to parliamentarians who are, or have been, subjected to arbitrary actions (e.g. State harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, unfair trial, violation of parliamentary immunity) during the exercise of their mandate, whether the Parliament is sitting, in recess or has been dissolved by unconstitutional or extraordinary measures.

The IPU's Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, is comprised of five parliamentarians representing different regions of the world and is responsible for the treatment of such complaints. The Committee holds hearings and undertakes onsite missions. If it does not prove possible to reach a satisfactory settlement of the case during a first phase of confidential examination and communication with the authorities of the countries concerned, public reports and recommendations for specific measures are submitted by the Committee to the Governing Council and thus are made public.

Senator Carstairs was elected to this committee in 2004. The committee meets four times a year, including on the occasion of the IPU's statutory Assemblies.

The Committee met from 7 to 11 May⁽⁴⁾. It conducted 11 hearings with delegations from countries where it had cases pending and, in total, examined 64 cases in 35 countries,

including 31 public cases affecting individuals from the following jurisdictions: Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, Eritrea, Honduras, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Palestine / Israel, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

(f) Geopolitical Group Meetings

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 (40 members), the Asia-Pacific Group (26 members), the Arab Group (14 members), the Eurasia Group (9 members), the Latin American Group (19 members) and the Twelve Plus Group (43 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 Asia Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group. Since Canada belongs to more than one geopolitical group, it submits candidatures for vacant positions within the Union through the Twelve Plus Group.⁽⁵⁾

A meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group was held on 7 May. **Senator Oliver** and **Senator Harb** attended this meeting.

Meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were held on 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 May. All Canadian delegates attended at least one meeting of the Twelve Plus Group. Agenda items considered included:

- Report from Group representatives on the work of the Executive Committee
- Election of the IPU Secretary General
- Evaluation of IPU reform
- Emergency item
- Reports and draft resolutions of Standing Committees
- Appointments to drafting committees
- Positions to be filled
- Proposed themes and rapporteurs for the 116th Assembly (spring 2007)
- Presidency of the Twelve Plus Group
- Review of Twelve Plus Group Rules
- Financial matters

- Schedule of Group meetings for the 115th Assembly (Geneva, October 16 to 18, 2006)

The most important decision of consequence to the Canadian IPU delegation occurred on 9 May, when Canada (represented by **Senator Harb**) was nominated to serve on the drafting committee for the Second Standing Committee studying “The role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment.”

(g) The Parliamentary Foundation for Democracy

The Parliamentary Foundation for Democracy was established in 2003 a means to mobilize outside funding sources to support certain elements of the IPU’s democracy-related work. The Foundation’s Board met on 6 May with its President, **Senator Oliver**, in the chair.

6. Follow-up

The IPU is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. In recent years the Union has solidified its role as the lead organization through which parliamentarians may promote and debate issues of global importance to civil society and has significantly strengthened its working relationship with the United Nations.

The 114th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings was a constructive exercise, during which its participants were able to focus on and debate issues of importance to the structure, functioning and composition of the IPU. It was also an occasion during which resolutions addressing important social, cultural and economic issues were debated and adopted.

Following each statutory IPU Assembly the Canadian IPU Group prepares this report, which is tabled in the Senate. It also forwards relevant IPU reports and resolutions to parliamentary committees and government departments and sends letters to Ottawa-based diplomatic missions concerning the IPU’s report and recommendations on the human rights violations of former or serving parliamentarians.

Respectfully submitted,

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

End notes

- (1) Source for this section: <http://www.ipu.org/english/whatipu.htm>.
- (2) See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/114/114.pdf>.
- (3) Resolutions adopted by the Standing Committees that met on the occasion of the 114th Assembly may be found at: <http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/stcnfres.htm#114>.

- (4) The resolutions of public cases adopted by this committee may be found at:
<http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/hr-cases.htm>.
- (5) Minutes of the meetings of the Asia Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group are available from the Canadian IPU Secretariat upon request.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group, Inter-Parliamentary Union	
ACTIVITY	114th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings	
DESTINATION	Nairobi, Kenya	
DATES	May 7-12, 2006	
SENATORS	The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Senator The Honourable Raynell Andreychuck, Senator The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, P.C., Senator The Honourable Joan Fraser, Senator The Honourable Mac Harb, Senator	
MEMBERS		
STAFF	Ms. Astrid Ratzel, Logistics Coordinator Mr. Joseph Jackson, Advisor Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard, Executive Secretary Mr. Jacques Maziade, Executive Co- Secretary	
TRANSPORTATION	AIR	\$ 64,331.61
	GROUND	\$ 266.50
ACCOMMODATION		\$ 16,230.51
HOSPITALITY		\$ 187.11
PER DIEMS		\$ 6,278.73
OFFICIAL GIFTS		\$ 381.42
MISCELLANEOUS/ REGISTRATION FEES		\$ 289.41
TOTAL		\$ 87,778.71