

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)

**London, United Kingdom
25 September 2009**

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

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.

Background on the Twelve Plus Group

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

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

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

According to the *Guidelines of the Twelve Plus Group*, the Steering Committee shall include: the two most recent predecessors of the current Twelve Plus Chairperson (as long as they are members of their national IPU delegation); members of the Twelve Plus Group serving on the Executive Committee; further members, invited by the

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

Chairperson on account of their particular abilities or merits, who could benefit the activities of the Twelve Plus Group as a whole.

The Meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee

Eight parliamentarians from seven countries participated in the meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee in London, United Kingdom on 25 September 2009. The countries represented were: Belgium, Canada, France, Iceland, Latvia, 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 121st IPU Assembly (Geneva, 19-21 October 2009). 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 House of Commons, London, UK (Jubilee Room) Friday 25 September 2009 at 0930

Participation

Mr John Austin (Chair of the 12+ Group), Senator Donald Oliver (Canada), Rudy Salles (France), Mrs Thuridur Backman (Iceland), Mrs Karina Petersone (Latvia), Mrs Doris Stump (Switzerland), Dr Roger Berry (United Kingdom), Mr Nigel Evans (United Kingdom).

In attendance

Mr Marc De Rouck (Belgium), Mr Joseph Jackson (Canada), Mr Philippe Bourasse (France), Mr Bertrand de Cordovez (France), Ms Arna Bang (Iceland), Mrs Sandra Paura (Latvia), Ms Charlie Holloway (United Kingdom), Mr Kenneth Courtenay (12+ Secretary), Ms Dominique Rees (12+ Secretariat), Ms Gabriella Liberotti (12+ Secretariat), Mrs Libby Hammond (12+ Secretariat)

General

1. Opening Remarks

Apologies had been received from Robert Del Picchia (France), Geert Versnick (Belgium), Daniel Reisiegl (Czech Republic) and Elsa Papademitriou (Greece) whose last meeting this would have been.

The Chair welcomed Doris Stump (Switzerland) and Thuridur Backman (Iceland) who has replaced Asta Moller on the Executive Committee.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the 12+ Steering Committee in London on Monday 2 March 2009

The Minutes were approved without comment.

4. Matters arising from previous meetings

The Chair reported that all the matters arising from previous meetings were covered in the agenda. The most important items for consideration were:

1. The consolidation of IPU Reform relating to the Geneva Assemblies;
2. The appointment of the Secretary General
3. The vacancies on the Executive Committee.

At its last meeting in Addis the 12+ agreed to revisit the issue of the use of airmiles/bonus points collected by IPU staff as raised by the internal auditor, Mr Hans-Joachim Fuchtel. The Chair apologised that he had not done anything further on this as yet.

IPU Matters

5. Executive Committee Business

The Chair stated that the Executive Committee had not met since Addis Ababa. Thuridur Backman (Iceland) was the only member of the Executive Committee present, but she has not yet attended a meeting.

The Executive Committee agenda for Geneva and a document on the issue of Palestinian Membership were circulated. The document called for the Governing Council decision to be modified by nominating the Palestinian National Council (PNC) to be the member of the IPU rather than the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The Chair reported that the 12+ Group had debated this matter at length at last year's Geneva meeting. The majority of members were very unhappy to move away from the principle that the PLC should be the legitimate member of the IPU. However, the compromise advised by the 12+ members of the Executive Committee, that the PNC could facilitate Palestine's membership in the short term, was accepted as the least worst option and formed the basis of the Governing Council's decision. In the view of the Chair the correspondence from the Speaker of the Palestine National Council did not change his mind. The Chair reported Robert Del Picchia's view that the Secretary General would resist the arguments made by the PNC on procedural grounds. Mr Del Picchia thought the Executive Committee would probably not reach a conclusion so the matter would be raised in Council. However it would need two-thirds majority support in order to be added to the Council's agenda. If the Executive Committee were to agree to the PNC's proposal the Council would be asked to vote.

Members agreed with the Chair that there was no reason to change the decision made by the 12+ in Geneva .

6. Consolidation of IPU Reform

Members considered a note prepared by the secretariat detailing responses received to the questionnaire on The Consolidation of IPU Reform. Doris Stump (Switzerland) thought some of the responses from the Swiss delegation may have accidentally been omitted; the secretariat undertook to make any necessary adjustments. With this proviso **Members endorsed the secretariat's summary** of the responses and draft recommendations and agreed it should form the basis of a resolution to be put to the Group in Geneva.

7. Appointment of the Secretary General

The Chair reminded colleagues of the Group's meeting on 10 April in Addis when it voted (24 to 8 with one abstention) to approve the proposal by the UK to have an open competition for the Secretary General's post and to reject the Executive Committee's proposal to have a secret ballot on a motion to offer the incumbent a further term unopposed. The matter was subsequently discussed in Council. It was understood that at the 121st meeting in Geneva, the UK's amendment would be considered and voted upon before Council proceeded to a vote on the Executive Committee's resolution. Further correspondence between Roger Berry (United Kingdom), Robert Del Picchia (France) and the President of the IPU revealed that the President believed the UK's amendment should only be considered after the Executive Committee's proposal,

meaning that if the Committee's proposal were approved the UK's amendment would not be considered at all. This approach seemed to be procedurally flawed.

Steering Committee Members considered the verbatim record of the Governing Council's proceedings on 10 April and the subsequent correspondence. Roger Berry (UK) reiterated that the UK's amendment sought to establish the principle that the post should be filled through transparent and open competition, as appropriate for an organisation like the IPU. The UK's position did not reflect any dissatisfaction with the current Secretary General. Mr Berry was concerned that principle and personality were being confused. He was puzzled by the President's response to his letter which did not appear to accurately reflect the verbatim record. It seemed to suggest that Nigel Evans (UK) had agreed in Council that the UK's amendment would be considered after the Executive Committee's proposal, which he had not.

Members discussed how to resolve the issue. It was felt that the principle of open competition should be established, if only for the benefit of future appointments. Members agreed that the text of any amendment should include the procedure for the appointment of the Secretary General in 2014. Members felt that the 12+ had made clear its support for the UK's amendment at its meeting in Addis, **therefore members agreed that the UK should formally submit its amendment to the Executive Committee on behalf of the 12+ Group.** Mr Berry agreed to draft the text in conjunction with the French delegation. Rudy Salles (France) and Karine Petersone (Latvia) said that France and Latvia would also be happy to sponsor the amendment. **It was also agreed** that the Chair should write to the 12+ Executive Committee representatives and the Chairs of the other Geo-political Groups urging support for the amendment and setting out the concerns of the UK and 12+ Group.

Several Members felt that there were wider issues which needed to be addressed. Doris Stump (Switzerland) was happy to support an extension of the incumbent's term, but was concerned that the Executive Committee and Governing Council were failing to function satisfactorily. Donald Oliver (Canada) echoed this view and raised the issue of the Secretary General's remuneration package. He recalled that on the occasion of a previous term renewal, the Chair had participated in a working group on this issue, he felt a similar approach should be taken if the Secretary General's term were to be extended again. He also wanted the Executive Committee to require the Secretary General to develop a succession plan. In his view this should include appointment of a deputy Secretary General. Rudy Salles (France) pointed out that the questionnaire results demonstrated clear dissatisfaction with Governance arrangements. In particular the Vice Presidents were not being used as intended and the Executive Committee seemed to operate in a vacuum. He also thought a Deputy Secretary General good organisational risk management, as did Nigel Evans (UK).

8. Preparation of the 121st IPU Assembly in Geneva

The Chair reported that representatives from the US Congress were expected in Geneva, despite the reservations relating to the composition of the Palestinian delegation in Addis Ababa and the ensuing disturbance on the floor of the Assembly. The US representatives would be observers, but as in Addis would probably be allowed to participate in workshops although without voting rights.

a. IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

The Convocation of the Committee's meeting in Geneva was distributed.

b. Panel discussions on the subject items chosen for debate during the 122nd Assembly in March 2010.

A memorandum on the panel discussions to be held in Geneva was distributed.

The Chair reported that Marija Lugaric, the Croatian rapporteur for the 3rd Committee report on 'Youth participation in the democratic process', had completed her report on time but again had not heard anything from her co-rapporteur, Mr Bagbin (Ghana). The President had apparently discussed the issue with Mr Bagbin who had professed himself content with the report. The Chair suggested that Ms Lugaric consider submitting the report only in her name but with reference to Mr Bagbin's satisfaction with its content. Mr Dismore (UK) had experienced problems with his co-rapporteur the previous year.

c. Emergency Item

Three Emergency Items had been posted on the IPU Website:

1. Parliamentary cooperation with the United Nations to promote investment in research and scientific advancements to boost agricultural productivity and combat drought-induced famine, floods and other natural disasters (Uganda, on behalf of the African Group)
2. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and particularly in Gaza (Oman, on behalf of the Arab Group)
3. Parliamentary action to ensure global food security (Australia)

The Arab Group had written to the Chair urging support for their item which they had withdrawn at the 120th Assembly to help enable a debate on the World Financial Crisis. The Chair thought that the Committee on Middle East Questions might be best placed to propose a draft resolution for consideration on the subject. He was concerned that none of the three subjects complied with Assembly Rule 11. 2. (a) which states that the item must "relate to a major event of international concern on which it appears necessary for the IPU to express its opinion".

Members discussed the Ugandan and Australian proposals which they felt both related to the broader issue of climate change. The upcoming climate change conference in Copenhagen was obviously a significant item but probably did not constitute an emergency item. Moreover the IPU had already planned meetings to allow Parliamentarians to engage with the conference and the subject was on the agenda of the UN Committee. Donald Oliver (Canada) suggested Afghanistan may be a topical issue but may not be of relevance to all countries. Similarly Karina Petersone (Latvia) suggested that for some countries the financial crisis continued to have a major impact, but recognised that as this had been discussed in Addis it would be unlikely to attract further debate under the emergency item. In conclusion, **members felt that the Australians and Ugandans should be encouraged to consider proposing a joint item** but that the 12+ should wait to see if any more subjects emerged before Geneva.

9. Vacancies

Executive Committee

The Chair announced that there were two vacancies on the Committee for representatives of the 12+. Thuridur Backman (Iceland) said that she was happy to take Asta Moller's position on the Executive Committee temporarily until a replacement was elected, but due to political pressures she did not seek election to the post. However, she reported that the Nordic Group intended to propose Krister Ornfjader from Sweden. The Chair recorded his thanks to Ms Backman for her willingness to substitute for Ms Moller temporarily. He also placed on record the Committee's thanks to Ms Moller for her valuable contributions. The secretariat were aware of several other candidates for the positions: Angela Napoli (Italy), Bogdan Barovič (Slovenia), Luca Volonte (Italy), Monika Griefahn (Germany) and Doris Stump (Switzerland). He thought that Italy would only propose one candidate, probably Angela Napoli. The secretariat would circulate the candidates names to 12+ members and would remind candidates that they were responsible for circulating their own manifestos, usually in English and French. He hoped that the Group would be able to settle on two names in order to ensure the 12+ made the decision internally rather than the decision being made by members of other Geo-political groups.

Committee on Middle East Questions

The Chair reported that there were two titular vacancies and three substitute vacancies. However, the 12+ Group already had 2 titular members (out of 6) and 3 substitutes (out of 6).

Group of Facilitators for Cyprus

One more facilitator was sought. The other two facilitators were from Egypt and the UK.

Internal Auditor

The IPU would be looking for 2 internal auditors for the year 2010, to report in Spring 2011. One of the current representatives, Daniel Reiesiegel (Czech Republic) may be eligible for re-election, but clarification will be sought from the IPU Secretariat.

10. Budget

The Chair reported that the budget documentation had been distributed. Rudy Salles (France) said that the proposed increase in the discussion paper prepared for the working group set up to review the IPU's scale of contributions for 2010 would not be acceptable to France. The Chair thought many other countries would share this view. He suggested the 12+ nominate representatives to meet with the new finance director to discuss concerns, **this was agreed.**

11. Membership

The Chair reported that there had been no requests for affiliation and three members were liable for suspension because of non-payment of dues: Liberia, Papua New Guinea and Somalia

12. Specialised IPU meetings held since the 120th IPU Assembly in Addis Ababa

The Steering Committee noted a list of the meetings held since the 120th Assembly. Roger Berry (UK) highlighted the executive summary of the regional meeting, hosted by

the UK Parliament, on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The meeting had been very productive although attendance had not been high. The UK were considering holding another seminar next year on human trafficking. He asked colleagues to let him know if they thought this would be of interest.

13. Other Matters relating to the IPU

A. UN REFORM

The Chair reported on the campaign to create a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, an issue also raised by Donald Oliver. Documents were distributed including a copy of a resolution and memorandum on UN Reform which was due to be debated at the next meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE (PACE). The Chair confessed a degree of difficulty as he is a member of the UK delegation to PACE and sits on the Committee that authored the draft resolution. He would not be able to attend the PACE session but would ask other UK Members to represent his views. He thought that the PACE resolution itself was not too damaging to the IPU position and merely referred to the need for a parliamentary dimension. However the memorandum was very damaging and reflected the author's disdain for the IPU. The author, Andreas Gross (Switzerland), referred to the European Parliament's proposals for working with regional parliamentary assemblies to act as a Consultative Parliamentary Assembly under the UN as a premise "for the establishment of a UN Parliamentary Assembly within the UN system". The explanatory memorandum states that "the IPU does not have the capacity nor the ambition to exercise an oversight over UN bodies and institutions in order to increase their accountability". The Chair stressed that this accountability was exactly what the IPU wanted. He added that Mr Gross was not alone in his anti-IPU stance. He was backed by PACE representatives from Portugal, France and some Eastern European Countries. He advised that the IPU President and Secretary General were aware of the situation.

Donald Oliver (Canada) provided statistics on the number of parliamentarians that had signed up to the campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly. In total there were 600 parliamentarians from 90 countries. In his view the IPU had done little to try and combat this campaign. It had Observer status at the UN but had failed to establish itself. Other Members agreed with this view. Both Doris Stump (Switzerland) and Rudy Salles (France) said that too few parliamentarians were aware of the IPU and fewer understood its role. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the other Geo-political Groups to draw their attention to the campaign. He would also contact 12+ Members of PACE to alert them to the draft resolution. Doris Stump (Switzerland) offered to comment on the resolution at the PACE meeting and in the PACE Socialist Political Group.

B. CANADA'S BID TO HOST AN IPU ASSEMBLY

Donald Oliver (Canada) circulated correspondence relating to Canada's bid to host the IPU Assembly in 2012. He reported that in his view the visa issues had been resolved. The funding had been secured and the hotels and conference centre in Quebec booked. However, the Secretary General had now indicated that the IPU was unable to undertake an inspection visit at present and was considering bids from Uganda and Brazil. The Canadian Delegation was both disappointed and frustrated. Members felt

that the Canadian bid preceded any other and should therefore be supported. The Chair offered to write to the President on behalf of the Steering Committee and would ask Executive Committee members to highlight Canada's precedence.

12+ Matters

14. Programme of activities and timetable of meetings for the 121st IPU Assembly in Geneva

The programme of meetings and details of the dinner were noted.

15. Membership

The Chair had nothing new to report. Montenegro, Azerbaijan and Ukraine remained unaffiliated.

16. 12+ Chairmanship

The Chair said that members would be aware of his decision not to stand at the next UK election, expected at the beginning of May. Depending on the date on which the Prime Minister dissolved Parliament, he may not be eligible to attend the meeting in Bangkok. He had discussed this scenario with the Vice President, Robert Del Picchia (France). They proposed that if that situation were to arise, Mr Del Picchia would take the Chair. Mr Del Picchia would remain in the Chair until the election of a new Chair at the Geneva meeting. The UK delegation secretariat would continue to support the 12+ Group until that time but would work closely with the staff of the French delegation. The Chair understood that Mr Del Picchia planned to stand for election as 12+ Chair. The Chair would write to other 12+ countries to ask that any other candidates identify themselves by the 122nd Assembly

17. Financial Matters

Papers relating to the 12+ current financial situation were circulated. The Chair reported that the secretariat were in discussions with Albania over subscriptions for 2008. The Albanians believed the monies to have been sent but they had not been received. If the situation was not resolved soon suspension from the Group would need to be considered.

18. Any Other Business

Doris Stump (Switzerland) reported that the Swiss delegation intended to offer to host the 125th Assembly in Berne in 2011. The invitation was dependent on approval by the Parliament in December.

19. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair would propose a date for the next meeting, possibly 1st March 2010.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group of the Inter- Parliamentary Union
DESTINATION	London, United Kingdom
DATES	September 25, 2009
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C.
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Mr. Joseph Jackson, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$6,373.12
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,091.01
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$ 406.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 1.50
TOTAL	\$7,871.63