

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
7 March 2008**

Report

Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee 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 (39 members), the Asia-Pacific Group (26 members), the Arab Group (15 members), the Eurasia Group (7 members), the Latin American Group (19 members) and the Twelve Plus Group (44 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 44 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 Chairperson on account of their particular abilities or merits, who could benefit the activities of the Twelve Plus Group as a whole.

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

3. The Meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee

Nine parliamentarians from nine countries participated in the meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee in London, United Kingdom on 7 March 2008. The countries represented were: Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, 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 118th IPU Assembly (Cape Town, 13-18 April 2008). 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 Group IPU

Appendix

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE
London (Attlee Suite, Portcullis House)
Friday 7 March 2008 at 9.30am



*Group of the Twelve Plus
in the Inter-Parliamentary Union*

*Groupe des Douze Plus
à l'Union interparlementaire*

Participation

Mr John Austin (Chair of the 12+ Group), Mr Geert Versnick (Belgium), Senator Donald Oliver (Canada), Mr Daniel Reisiegl (Czech Republic), Ms Katri Komi (Finland), Mrs Elisavet Papademetriou (Greece), Mrs Karina Petersone (Latvia), Mrs Brigitte Gadiant (Switzerland), Dr Roger Berry (United Kingdom)

In Attendance

Mr Marc De Rouck (Belgium), Mr Joseph Jackson (Canada), Mrs Hana Sediva (Czech Republic), Ms Klara Urbanova (Czech Republic), Ms Sylvie Andrisova (Czech Republic), Mr Vesa-Pekka Kangaskorpi (Finland), Mr Philippe Bourasse (France), Mr Bertrand de Cordovez (France), Ms Popi Mermigki (Greece), Ms Aspasia Papaloi (Greece), Mrs Sandra Paura (Latvia), Mr Chintan Makwana (United Kingdom), Mrs Penny Vagg (United Kingdom), Mr Kenneth Courtenay (12+ Secretary), Miss Dominique Rees (12+ Secretariat), Miss Francesca Ingham (12+ Secretariat), Miss Libby Preston (12+ Secretariat)

Apologies for absence

Senator Robert Del Picchia (France), Mr Rudy Salles (France)

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and extended a particular welcome to Mr Daniel Reisiegl (Czech Republic) who was attending the Steering Committee for the first time as part of the rotating membership system between Slovenia, Poland and the Czech Republic. Mr Reisiegl's colleague Ms Hana Sediva was also welcomed as an observer.

Apologies had been received from Senator Robert Del Picchia and Mr Rudy Salles (France) who could not attend due to local elections in France.

The Chair congratulated Senator Donald Oliver (Canada) on his election to Chair of the Asia Pacific Group.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the 12+ Steering Committee in London on Friday 7 September 2007

The Minutes were approved without comment.

4. Matters arising from previous meetings

IPU Reform

A focus group on IPU Reform had been created in Geneva comprising Mr Rudy Salles, Mr Finn Martin Vallersnes and Mr Joop Atsma. It was hoped that the group would meet in Cape Town and report at the 12+ meeting.

Committee on Middle East Questions

Mr John Carter and the Rt Hon Ann Clwyd had voiced concerns about the role of this Committee and its future work programme. Both had written to the IPU Secretary General Mr Anders Johnsson on the subject and the Chair proposed the 12+ discuss the matter in Cape Town.

IPU Matters

5. Preparation of the 118th IPU Assembly in Cape Town

a. Reports and Resolutions of the Standing Committees

The Chair said that three Members of the 12+ were acting as rapporteurs of the Standing Committees:

Committee I: Peace and International Security: The role of parliamentarians in striking a balance between national security, human security and individual freedoms, and in averting the threat to democracy: Rt Hon Lord Morris of Aberavon KG QC (United Kingdom)

Committee II: Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade: Parliamentary oversight of State policies on foreign aid: Mr F.-X. De Donnea (Belgium)

Committee III: Democracy and Human Rights: Migrant workers, people trafficking, xenophobia and human rights: Mr Andrew Dismore (United Kingdom)

Mr Roger Berry (United Kingdom) commented that the two United Kingdom Rapporteurs had experienced some difficulty in contacting the other Rapporteurs on their Committees. Lord Morris had had particularly difficulty as he was one of three Rapporteurs. The United Kingdom delegation would strongly discourage Committees from appointing three or more Rapporteurs in future. The Chair thanked Roger Berry for this feedback.

b. Emergency item

The Chair informed Members that the 12+ had not received any formal notification of any emergency item however he had circulated correspondence about an item the Japanese delegation may propose. The Chair queried whether the proposed item would meet the statute requirements for an emergency item but this would be a matter for the IPU Executive to decide.

Mrs Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) suggested an emergency item to follow up on the resolutions from the Bali Ministerial meeting on climate change. Ms Katri Komi (Finland) said that the Finnish delegation had also received details of the Japanese Item but were asked to support the motion as a possible topic for the 1st Standing Committee.

The Chair thought a follow-up to the intergovernmental meeting in Bali would be supported and comply with the statutes for an emergency item. He suggested the subject be proposed to the 12+ in Cape Town provided a more pressing emergency had not emerged by that time. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) offered to draft a title and explanatory paragraph for consideration by the 12+.

Ms Karine Petersone (Latvia) proposed an item on violence in Burma. The Chair advised that the 12+ had withdrawn its item on climate change at the last Assembly in order to support an emergency item on violence in Burma.

Mr Geert Versnick (Belgium) said that the Chair of the Belgian IPU group had been approached by a Kuwaiti Parliamentarian who was thinking of submitting an item on Islamo-phobia. He had some reservations as to whether this met the criteria for an emergency item. Katri Komi (Finland) said that she had also received this information from a Kuwaiti delegation visiting Finland. Donald Oliver (Canada) had been in Kuwait recently and the Speaker of the Kuwaiti Parliament had told him that the subject might be submitted to the UN Committee. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) recognised the sensitivity of the subject but expressed concerns that it had been debated many times by various different international organisations. She would not be keen to support an emergency item on this subject for that reason. The Chair said that the Committee on Middle East questions could, within its remit, propose resolutions on subjects such as religious conflict. He agreed with Geert Versnick that the subject of Islamo-phobia may not comply with the statutes on emergency items. He suggested the subject be considered by the Committee on Democracy and Human Rights or the UN Committee.

The Steering Committee agreed to propose climate change (as suggested by Elsa Papademetriou) to the 12+ Group in Cape Town for submission as a emergency item unless a more pressing matter arose.

c. Proposed topics and rapporteurs for future assemblies

The Chair said he had not been notified of any subjects but asked Members to give some thought to possible topics before the Assembly in Cape Town.

The Chair had circulated a copy of the Executive Committee agenda for the Cape Town Assembly. He expressed some concern that the appointment of the next Secretary General was not on the agenda. It would need to be discussed at the 2008 Geneva Assembly, at the latest, if the Executive Committee were to appoint the new Secretary General through open competition. The current Secretary General was due to stand

down in July 2010. The Chair proposed that the Executive Committee draft a person and job specification which should then be advertised. They would need to agree a budget and appropriate outlets for the advertisements.

Roger Berry (United Kingdom) had been surprised to learn that the Secretary General was not usually appointed through open competition, the United Kingdom delegation certainly thought this should be the case. Donald Oliver (Canada) suggested the 12+ Group could draw up a person and job specification for submission to the Executive Committee. Daniel Reisiel (Czech Republic) said that succession planning must be considered in the terms of reference for the next Secretary General. The Chair explained that Anders Johnsson had been reappointed last time without open competition because the President of the IPU had changed at the same time. No criticism of Anders Johnsson was implied. He thought it would be difficult for the 12+ to draft a job/person specification from scratch but encouraged 12+ members of the Executive Committee to raise the matter.

Geert Versnick (Belgium) suggested that 12+ members of the Executive Committee discuss the subject informally with Anders Johnsson in Cape Town. It would be better if a proposal to the Executive Committee came from the outgoing Secretary General. The Chair thought that the subject also needed to be raised formally at the Executive Committee in order to be noted in the minutes. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) was in favour of adopting both approaches, informal and formal. The Chair recalled that the Executive Committee had set up a working party on the subject but it had not met many times. He hoped the (Executive Committee) Bureau, through one of the Vice-Presidents, would have greater oversight of the organisation's finances and administration.

6. Vacancies

Executive Committee

The Chair explained that Katri Komi would reach the end of her term on the Executive Committee in Cape Town. Ms Monica Griefahn from Germany had withdrawn her nomination for the Committee in Geneva because she planned to stand for this forthcoming vacancy. The appointment of a woman would ensure that the gender balance was maintained. Katri Komi (Finland) thought that Ms Asta Möller from the Icelandic delegation was interested in standing for the Committee. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) felt that the 12+ had made a promise to the German delegation and she felt obliged to support Monica Griefahn. The Chair stressed that the 12+ had not made a formal agreement to appoint Monica Griefahn. However, he understood a number of 12+ Members may feel honour-bound to support her candidacy. A vote would take place if there were several candidates. The 12+ Steering Committee did not need to recommend one individual.

Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians

The Chair said that subject to the Council's approval of the rule changes, each geopolitical group would be asked to submit two candidatures (one titular and one substitute) for a four-year term, and two candidatures (one titular and one substitute) for a two-year term. Ms Brigitta Gadiant (Switzerland) said a member of the Swiss

delegation was keen to stand. Katri Komi (Finland) thought there may also be a candidate from the Nordic countries. She supported Ms Pia Cayetano's candidacy for the position of President of the Committee. The Chair said that the closing date for nominations was 15 April. He wished to agree the 12+ nominations by consensus, if possible, and asked countries to submit candidates' curricula vitae to the 12+ secretariat before the meeting in Cape Town. Geert Versnick (Belgium) stressed that, in regard to all committees, it was important to balance new and experienced IPU parliamentarians.

Committee on Middle East Questions (ad hoc)

The Chair announced that there were 3 substitute positions vacant. The vacancies would be considered in Cape Town. He asked countries to submit candidates' curricula vitae to the secretariat before the meeting in Cape Town.

Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

The Chair said that subject to the Council's approval, an elected Committee to promote respect for International Humanitarian Law will be formed. Each geopolitical group would be asked to submit one titular and one substitute member each for a four-year term. The Chair said that candidates should have experience in refugee law or international humanitarian law. Nominations would be discussed in Cape Town.

Vice Presidents

The Chair said that one Member from each geopolitical group would be nominated to the Bureau as a Vice-President. The Chair asked the 12+ Executive Committee members to meet and decide, by consensus, who would represent the 12+ Group on the Bureau. If a consensus could not be reached, the 12+ would need to discuss candidates in Cape Town.

7. Budget

The financial statement had not yet been signed off but the Chair asked Members to note the following points passed on from the IPU Secretariat:

- There were no losses;
- It was proposed to write-off CHF 95,000 of money deposited in Nigeria in relation to an EU project some while ago;
- There was a small liability in the legacy pension fund due to decline in stock markets;
- There was still a tax issue with France on IPU staff resident there;
- Voluntary fundraising targets had not been met;
- There would be a statement in Cape Town on carbon offsetting policy; and
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) owed the IPU 20,000 Euros.

The Chair added that Katri Komi (Finland) was the Chair of the Pension Committee. He also explained the background of the PAM. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) said that the Member countries of the PAM had agreed to pay the remaining monies, although it had expressed concern at the high cost.

8. IPU Membership

The Chair reported on IPU Membership and emphasised that the situation could change before the Executive Committee meeting in Cape Town.

Affiliation / reaffiliation

A request for reaffiliation had been received from Iraq and Mauritania. A request for affiliation had been received from East Timor. The West African Economic and Monetary Union was seeking associate membership and Human Rights Watch was asking for observer status. It was expected that Lesotho, and probably Sierra Leone, would apply for membership either at the Cape Town Assembly or in the near future.

Bangladesh

The Parliament of Bangladesh had not been functioning since November 2006. The Executive Committee would be presented with a document including the explanation of the Speaker of the Bangladeshi Parliament and would have to take a decision.

Ecuador

The Parliament was put in recess by the Constituent Assembly. A referendum for the adoption of the New Constitution was foreseen for the second half of the year following which elections would be called to elect a new Parliament. The Executive Committee would discuss this issue and decide the way to proceed.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Parliament of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had not paid since its affiliation in 2004 and had consequently accumulated more than three years of arrears and was therefore liable for suspension. A small payment had been made but the Parliament owed most of the contribution for 2004, and the full contribution for 2005, 2006 and 2007. This, together with the contribution for 2008, brought the total of its debt to CHF 103,104. The Executive Committee was likely to recommend that they be suspended.

Kyrgyzstan

The Parliament was in arrears for its contributions since 2004. The Parliament owed most of the contribution for 2004, and the full contribution for 2005, 2006 and 2007. This, together with the contribution for 2008, brought the total of its debt to CHF 113,324.97. It was likely that the Executive Committee would recommend to suspend them.

Nicaragua

The Parliament of Nicaragua was in arrears for its full annual contributions since 2005 and had consequently accumulated more than three years of arrears and was therefore liable for suspension. The Executive Committee would examine the situation and submit a recommendation to the Governing Council.

Other Members

A further seven Parliaments – Bolivia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Liberia, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea and Somalia had accumulated more than two years

of arrears. They were therefore deprived of their voting rights and could only send two-member delegations to attend IPU meetings.

9. Specialised IPU meetings held since the 117th IPU Assembly in Geneva

The Steering Committee noted a list of the meetings held since the 117th Assembly.

Roger Berry (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom delegation would welcome more advance notice of meetings and improved clarity regarding meeting programmes. It was sometimes difficult to decide which parliamentarians should attend a meeting when the agenda was unclear. The Chair asked Executive Committee Members to raise this matter in Cape Town. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) explained the system operated by the Greek Parliament to select parliamentarians for ad-hoc IPU meetings; she thought meeting invitations were circulated in good time. Donald Oliver (Canada) said that for budgetary reasons he welcomed early notification of meetings. He queried the IPU's willingness to allow its name to be associated with some of the meetings organised by external bodies. Roger Berry (United Kingdom) agreed with Donald Oliver. He had attended a conference on cluster bombs which had been part-sponsored by the IPU but had been surprised there had been no reference to the IPU at any of the meetings. In relation to his earlier point on notification of meeting agendas, he explained that the United Kingdom often had several applicants for conference places and the difficulty was deciding who should attend without having a clear agenda. The Chair shared the concerns explained by Donald Oliver and Roger Berry and asked Executive Committee members to raise them in Cape Town.

The Chair reported that at the ILO meeting in Portugal in November last year it had been suggested that the IPU should establish a parliamentary advisory group on employment and decent work. The group would be composed of three Members from each of the geopolitical groups. He suggested the 12+ seek volunteers in Cape Town.

The Chair said that the Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs had met in November in New York. A report had been circulated. Geert Versnick (Belgium) reported that the meeting had been useful.

10. Other Matters relating to the IPU

a. Bid for an Assembly in Canada

Donald Oliver (Canada) said that Canada was interested in hosting the 2010 Assembly but had experienced problems with Clause 5 of the model agreement with the IPU, which requires the host country to guarantee a visa to all delegates in advance. He had corresponded with the Secretary General on the matter. The problem centred on international travel bans, which had to be respected. There was no way that Canada could give a comprehensive assurance and this was similar to most Western countries. Canada was not prepared to fund a bid unless this problem could be resolved. Anders Johnsson had told him that he thought a solution could be found by means of Ministerial Visas; he had recently managed to secure one such visa but they were rarely used. He was disappointed to learn that the Secretary General had now approached other countries to ask if they would host the Assembly in 2010. He asked members of the Executive Committee to support him when he appeared before the Executive

Committee in Cape Town to try and resolve the issue. He also asked the Chair to meet with the Chairs of other geopolitical groups to ascertain their views.

Karine Petersone (Latvia) appreciated the efforts that Donald Oliver had made to try and resolve the problems with Clause 5. She was disappointed to learn that the Secretary General had approached other countries to host in the Assembly in 2010. She also expressed great concern at the prospect that the Assembly could not be held in Europe without the redrafting of Clause 5. She asked if the United Nations had the same problem. The Chair explained that the United Nations and European Union did not have the same difficulties because they were classed as inter-governmental bodies.

Roger Berry (United Kingdom) stressed the need for the 12+ to support Donald Oliver and the Canadian delegation. The United Kingdom delegation would be willing to share their correspondence regarding the UK's attempt to host an Assembly in London in 2004. The Chair said he was happy to meet the other geopolitical chairs. He stressed that Clause 5 was part of the model agreement that host Parliaments were required to sign: it was not part of the Statutes of the IPU. The Steering Committee agreed to support Canada in its bid to host the Assembly in 2010.

Katri Komi (Finland) asked whether there had been any further news on the venue for the 2009 Assembly. The Chair confirmed that Ethiopia and Venezuela had both offered to host.

(post meeting note: It is understood that the Spring 2009 Assembly will be taking place in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia))

b. Election of the President

The Chair reported that there were two candidates so far – Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab from Namibia and Mr Agung Laksono from Indonesia. Although the 12+ had not come to a formal decision, many Members had expressed the view that it was Africa's turn. Normally, the 12+ invited each candidate to address the Group. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece) thought it was too early to decide. Several Members said that their countries had already been lobbied by Indonesian Ambassadors. Some had reservations about an Indonesian President after the difficulties experienced with the emergency item in Bali. Geert Versnick (Belgium) said it was important to hear each of the candidates and to come to a common 12+ position. The concept of a Presidency which rotated between continents was established in the Statutes. He thought the 12+ should support a non-Asian candidate if the Group were to support the Philippine candidate for President of the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians. Donald Oliver (Canada) agreed. The Chair concluded that the secretariat would make time in the Cape Town agenda for candidates to address the 12+ Group but invitations would not be sent to the candidates until a later time.

12+ Matters

11. Programme of activities and timetable of meetings for the 118th IPU Assembly in Cape Town

The programme of activities and timetable of meetings for the 118th IPU Assembly in Cape Town had been circulated. A dinner would be arranged for the evening of 12 April in the Vendome hotel in Cape Town.

12. Election of the 12+ Chair

The Chair said that his two year term was due to end in October this year. He had consulted the Officers of the British Group, who were prepared, subject to the agreement of the Executive Committee of the British Group, to support his decision to stand again for another two years. However, he stressed that the position of Chair was subject to open competition and any country could propose a candidate. Elsa Papademetriou (Greece), Geert Versnick (Belgium) and Karine Petersone (Latvia) welcomed the Chair's decision to stand again.

13. Membership

The Chair had written to Montenegro to ask if they would like to join the 12+. He had not yet received a reply. He would be grateful if Members could exert any influence they might have with Montenegrin contacts.

14. Financial Matters

A breakdown of 12+ finances in 2007 had been circulated. All contributions have now been received. The Financial Statement would be circulated to 12+ Members in Cape Town. Members noted that variations in the currency markets affected the exact amount of monies received; this issue may be revisited in the future.

The Chair explained that the rules were vague on what the 12+ Secretariat could charge to the 12+ account. A table had been circulated which indicated what the 12+ Secretariat proposed the Chair's Parliament should charge to the 12+ account and what it should pay for itself. Katri Komi (Finland) asked about the cost to the Chair's Parliament. The costs was reported as in the region of £15,000 per year, mostly to cover the extra staff that needed to be deployed. The Steering Committee agreed that the financial division proposed by the secretariat should be adopted as the norm.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair proposed Friday 12 September 2008 as the date of the next Steering Committee meeting. Geert Versnick (Belgium) said he would be at a WTO Conference in Geneva so could not attend on this date. The Chair asked the Secretariat to look at the possibility of an alternative date. Members would be advised of the date as soon as possible.

(post meeting note: it is now proposed to have the meeting of the Steering Committee on Monday 15 September 2008).

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	Meeting of the Twelve Plus Steering Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
DESTINATION	London, United Kingdom
DATES	March 7, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C.
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Mr. Joseph Jackson, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$4,418.88
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 727.06
HOSPITALITY	
PER DIEMS	\$1,177.70
OFFICIAL GIFTS	
MISCELLANEOUS	
TOTAL	\$6,323.64