

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the
128th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings
Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
Quito, Ecuador
March 22-27, 2013**

Report

1. Background¹

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, with which it works closely, and shares its objectives. The IPU also cooperates with regional inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals.

At the close of the 128th Assembly, 162 national parliaments were members of the IPU and ten regional parliamentary assemblies were associate members. Most members are affiliated with one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.

2. Agenda for the 128th IPU Assembly

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body that expresses the views of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on political issues. Bi-annually it brings together parliamentarians to study international problems and make recommendations for action.

The agenda for the 128th IPU Assembly, which took place in Quito, Ecuador between 22 and 27 March 2013, addressed the following items:

- General Debate: From unrelenting growth to purposeful development "Buen Vivir": New approaches, new solutions;
- First Standing Committee: Enforcing the responsibility to protect: the role of parliament in safeguarding civilians' lives;
- Second Standing Committee: Fair trade and innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable development;
- Third Standing Committee: The use of media, including social media, to enhance citizen engagement and democracy; and
- Emergency Item: The role of parliaments in addressing the security and humanitarian impact of the crisis in Syria, and in bringing pressure to bear on their governments to assume their international and humanitarian responsibility

¹ Source for this section: <http://www.ipu.org/english/whatipu.htm>

towards Syrian refugees and to support the neighbouring countries that receive them.

A detailed report on the 128th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings is available online.²

3. The Canadian Delegation

Delegations from the parliaments of 118 countries attended the 128th IPU Assembly. Of the 1,198 delegates in attendance, 619 were members of national parliaments, of which 202 were women (32.6%) and six were Canadian parliamentarians. The Canadian delegation included:

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, President of the Canadian IPU Group and Leader of the delegation

The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Senator

The Honourable Dennis Dawson, Senator

Blaine Calkins, M.P.

Chris Charlton, M.P.

Libby Davies, M.P.

4. Interventions made by the Canadian Delegation during the 128th IPU Assembly

Canadian delegates participated in a variety of Assembly meetings and activities during the 128th IPU Assembly. Senator Ataullahjan spoke during the Plenary Debate; Senator Dawson spoke during the debate on the emergency item; Senator Oliver and Blaine Calkins attended meetings of the First Standing Committee; Blaine Calkins attended meetings of the Second Committee; and, Chris Charlton and Libby Davies attended meetings of the Third Committee. In addition, all delegates attended sessions of the Plenary Debate and Senator Ataullahjan, Senator Oliver, Chris Charlton and Libby Davies attended the daylong Meeting of Women Parliamentarians.

a. General debate

During the General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world, **Senator Salma Ataullahjan** focused on the overall theme of *From unrelenting growth to purposeful development "Buen Vivir": New approaches, new solutions*. She stated:

[...] In the last thirty years, we have witnessed extraordinary economic progress in a number of countries. Commentators have discussed a global economic convergence between developing and developed countries. Yet, while many of these emerging economies are considered new centres of regional power, they must still address the needs of their many citizens who live in poverty. It has been estimated that four-fifths of the people living on less than two dollars per day in the world now live in middle-income countries.

The situation in many high-income countries is another example of the complexity of our challenges. While many industrialized countries continue

² See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

to enjoy affluence, in addition to contending with issues like high unemployment and income disparities, they are facing budgetary pressures and difficult choices regarding spending decisions and program priorities.

In addition to this first general point, I would also join those who emphasize the need for us to take a balanced approach to development debates.

We all know that we cannot think of “well-being” as a purely economic concept. I would underline that we must also focus on institutions, and on rights. The outcome document of the Rio+20 conference, which is aptly titled *The Future We Want*, states that in order to achieve sustainable development goals, “we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic.” Efforts to catalyse economic growth must be accompanied by progress in governance.

A Canadian parliamentary committee report on the role of the private sector in international development, which was tabled in November, made this connection between economic and political progress. The House of Commons Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee explained the key message of its report as follows: “it is the combination of increased private sector activity alongside good public policies and robust institutions that is most likely to lead to success.” Institutions establish the framework within which prosperity can be realized. They also allow for negotiation between sometimes competing goals.

The importance of democratic governance to development has been recognized by the IPU, which is calling for its inclusion as a stand-alone or cross-cutting goal in the post-2015 development agenda. It also bears underscoring that democratic governance is indivisible from the rule of law and human rights. In too many countries, human rights are paid rhetorical credence, but ignored in daily situations.

Respect for human rights is critical to ensuring a development process that is inclusive and lasting. Embedding human rights obligations in national and international approaches to development guards against marginalization, exclusion and arbitrary-decision-making. It guards against development that can benefit some at the expense of others. In essence, ensuring that human rights are a core aspect of our development work promotes fairness and human dignity.

The relationship between development and human rights was articulated in the work of Indian economist and Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen. In his book *Development as Freedom*, he famously argued that development can be viewed “as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.” On this foundation, he further argued, and I quote, that “Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom:

poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states.”

Given the centrality of human dignity to development, it is easy to see why a focus solely on economic growth can give an incomplete picture. For example, some of the countries that were key focal points of the Arab Spring recorded economic growth at the national level prior to January 2011. However, well before those dramatic events, the underlying fragility of many of the governing systems in these same countries was revealed in the 2009 Arab Human Development Report.

The findings of that report and others suggest that, in addition to considering aggregate progress, we must also look at societal indicators, such as the existence of economic opportunities for our young men and women, and the presence or absence of economic vulnerability and insecurity, which can reveal much about the human side of development.

Underlying factors that give rise to equality of opportunities - such as access to healthcare and education - deserve our closest attention. We need a level playing field that can facilitate upward mobility, and ultimately, prosperity.

My final point relates to the need to ensure that we keep our focus on people, as the international community and states pursue development goals. Here, it is important to highlight again the outcome document of the Rio+20 conference, which recognizes “that people are at the centre of sustainable development...” As the representatives of our citizens, ensuring that development is people-centered is a key task for parliamentarians.

To this end, there are a number of tools at our disposal that we all understand well. The importance of scrutinizing legislation and spending plans, for example, for their impact on different groups and regions, and on the long-term fundamentals of the nation's finances and social programs, has been noted.

Yet, instead of focusing on those tools, I would like to conclude by drawing particular attention to what is perhaps an underappreciated but core component of the work of all parliamentarians. That important function is direct engagement with the people we represent. It is our physical and virtual presence in our communities and neighbourhoods. In this globalized and digital age, characterized by economic uncertainty and the constancy of change, it is understandable that many people feel anxious.

Therefore, some of our most essential activities as parliamentarians are our face-to-face meetings with those we represent – hearing their concerns, responding to their questions, and helping them to find needed

information and to understand government policies and programs. Now, I'm not suggesting that, as parliamentarians, we can keep at bay all the pressures of modern life or reinforce all of our social structures and networks.

But, we know that what we can and must be is the conduit between our citizens and our legislatures and governments - ensuring that we are always the human face of what can for some people seem like imposing or distant institutions. [...]

b. Emergency Item

Senator Dennis Dawson participated in the debate on the Emergency Item addressing “the security and humanitarian impact of the crisis in Syria and in bringing pressure to bear on their governments to assume their international and humanitarian responsibility towards Syrian refugees and to support the neighbouring countries that receive them.” During the debate, he highlighted that escalating violence in Syria has resulted in an increasing number of deaths, humanitarian needs, and displacement of civilians, and represents a threat to regional stability. He called for immediate cessation of the violence and human rights violations in Syria, and called on all countries including Syria, Syria’s neighbours, and donor countries to collaborate in addressing the refugee situation. He also indicated that it is the second time in a year that the IPU has debated the situation in Syria, and that the resolution adopted at the 126th Assembly called for a parliamentary mission to Syria. This mission never occurred, and he stressed that the IPU must not only talk about the issue, but also ensures that its needs are heard and its influence contributes to resolving the situation. The text of the resolution may be found online.³

c. Committees

Senator Donald Oliver participated in the plenary debate on *The responsibility to protect: the role of parliaments in safeguarding citizens’ lives* that took place in the First Standing Committee on Peace and Security. He insisted that the draft resolution make clear that parliamentarians and the international community must act to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes. He also presented the main amendments submitted by the Canadian Group of the IPU. Most of these amendments were intended to strengthen the resolution by aligning its text to internationally agreed upon documents including the 2005 World Summit outcome document, by making clear reference to the four crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which are defined under international law, and by accurately reflecting the role of the UN Security Council to limit confusion with the role of the UN system as a whole. No Drafting Committee was struck to consider the draft resolution. Therefore, **Senator Oliver** and **Blaine Calkins, M.P.** participated in the consideration of the draft resolution in plenary. They presented and spoke on each amendment submitted by the Canadian Group, and debated amendments submitted by other delegations before those were voted upon. The text of the resolution may be found online.⁴

³ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/res-emrg.htm>

⁴ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/Res-1.htm>

Blaine Calkins, M.P. participated in the plenary debate on *Fair trade and innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable development* that took place in the Second Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade. He reaffirmed Canada's commitment to support fair trade and Canada's view that meeting our long-term development objectives will require both public and private resources. Innovative financing mechanisms should focus on leveraging limited public funds to attract private sector resources. He then spoke about some of the most important amendments the Canadian Group has submitted. In particular, he indicated that while fair trade is an important tool for some communities in developing countries, it will not solve the overall problems caused by current distortions in world agricultural markets. It is important that Fair Trade initiatives do not distract the international community's attention from the reform of mainstream agricultural trade. He also stressed that the resolution should recognize that countries have different priorities and approaches, and therefore should not be overly prescriptive in outlining what specific financing mechanisms parliaments should be endorsing. The text of the resolution may be found online.⁵

Chris Charlton, M.P. participated in the plenary debate on *The use of media, including social media, to enhance citizen engagement and democracy* that took place in the Third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. Ms. Charlton and Ms. M.T. Kubayi (South Africa), as co-rapporteurs on this topic, presented their draft resolution. Ms. Charlton focused her presentation on the main recommendation. She indicated that part of the challenge in preparing the draft resolution has been to balance the well-established rights of free expression with the need to ensure accountability and respect for others in the unrestrained discourse sometimes witnessed in social media, as well as in the traditional media. Among other things, the resolution:

- Recommends that parliaments develop strategies and guidelines for enhancing citizen engagement in the democratic process through the use of media, including social media;
- Calls on the IPU to collect and make publicly available the guidelines developed by its Member Parliaments, and to develop best practices in the use of social media to enhance citizen engagement;
- Urges parliaments and parliamentarians to ensure that their citizen engagement efforts are accessible to all regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, place of residence, disability, ethnicity or political affiliation;
- Urges parliaments to take effective measures aimed at narrowing the digital divide;
- Underscores that any regulation of the media must be consistent with international human rights obligations in relation to the right to freedom of expression;
- Invites parliaments to examine and put in place where necessary a regulatory framework to ensure that mobile and online platforms protect the rights of all persons in a representative and participatory democracy; and
- Urges parliaments to enhance women's participation and engagement with youth.

⁵ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/Res-2.htm>

As a co-rapporteur, Ms Charlton also participated in the drafting committee that considered the amendments and finalized the text of the resolution. **Senator Salma Atallahjan** and **Libby Davies, M.P.** also attended meetings of this Committee. The text of the resolution may be found online.⁶

5. Participation by Canadian Delegates in Related Meetings and Activities

Delegates also participated in the following side events:

a. The 266th Session of the IPU Executive Committee

The IPU Executive Committee held its Meetings on 19, 20, and 26 March. **Senator Donald Oliver**, who was elected to the Executive for a four year term in October 2012, participated in these meetings. The proceedings of the Executive Committee were devoted to discussing and making recommendations on agenda items to be addressed and ratified by the IPU's Governing Council. A summary of its decisions may be found online.⁷

b. The 192nd Session of the IPU Governing Council

The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the IPU. Several committees and working groups fall under the Council and report to it on their work. Meetings of the 192nd Session of the IPU Governing Council were held on 23, 26 and 27 March. **All delegates** attended at least one session of the Governing Council. A detailed report on the work and decisions of the Governing Council is available online.⁸

During the reports on activities of IPU committees and other bodies, **Senator Oliver**, in his capacity as a member of the Gender Partnership Group, reported on some key statistics regarding women's participation in IPU activities and bodies. He announced that this Assembly registered the highest proportion of women delegates ever reached by an IPU Assembly: 33.2% or 207 women delegates. A majority of delegations have more than 30% of women, and 20 delegations, including Canada, have an equal number of men and women delegates. Over the past years the participation of women in IPU bodies has been steady at about 30% in both the Governing Council and the Executive Committee. Unfortunately, the situation is less satisfactory in Standing Committees. Of the three current Standing Committee bureaus, two have only male titular members and not a single woman chair of a Standing Committee. The situation is also preoccupying in ad-hoc committees. The Committee on UN Affairs for instance includes only 1 woman out of 12 members. The example of the Committee on Middle East Questions is more positive however. The Committee has an equal number of men and women members. This is due to the fact that its rules actually require equality in membership. The Gender Partnership Group also followed up on recent developments in parliaments with no women members. Members met with the delegation of Saudi Arabia where 30 women entered parliament for the first time ever in January 2013. He concluded in expressing the wish that the 5 parliaments with no women members follow suit, those being: Qatar, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Vanuatu.

⁶ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/Res-3.htm>

⁷ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

⁸ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

Libby Davies, M.P., in her capacity as the Chair of the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, reported on the meeting of this group. She recalled that at the 127th IPU Assembly in Quebec City, the Governing Council approved an expansion of the mandate of the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS to also include maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) issues. The reasons for this expansion were that:

- the growth of the IPU's maternal, newborn and child health policies and activities has placed a demand for a more formal structure to provide political ownership and an avenue for reporting back to IPU processes; and
- the implementation of the IPU resolution on "Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children", adopted at the 126th IPU Assembly in Kampala, established the need for a follow-up and accountability mechanism within formal IPU structures.

Therefore, she indicated that the twelfth meeting of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS-MNCH was under this revised mandate. The members of the Group and all those who participated in the meeting affirmed the strategic importance of a mechanism which allows an integrated approach to the IPU's work in this area. The Advisory Group endorsed the MNCH work plan and approved the mechanism which the IPU secretariat had proposed for ensuring the implementation of the Kampala resolution on women's and children's health. The mechanism will enable the IPU to report to the Governing Council annually on progress in the implementation of this resolution. Furthermore, as the political custodian of the MNCH project, the Advisory Group will in the future contribute to the strategic direction of the project and provide input in development of the work plans. The Advisory Group agreed that the focus of its work in the area of HIV/AIDS should continue to be on punitive and discriminatory laws. It was also agreed that intellectual property rights should be put back on the agenda of the IPU and that partnerships should be sought to address this complex issue. It was decided that support to parliamentary bodies dealing with HIV, for example in Burundi, will be a key activity. In addition, the Advisory Group will undertake a comparative study on good legislative practices on key populations affected by HIV, such as men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and sex workers. The Group also recommended that the IPU should organize a parliamentary meeting at the 2014 International AIDS Conference and that it should start planning for the event in the coming months. The Advisory Group also recognized the need to work more closely in the future. Members agreed that regular e-mail exchanges and teleconferences should become part of their work. This would ensure not only a timely input of the Group members to the activities of the IPU, but also regular updates by the IPU on the progress on implementation of the work plans.

c. The 18th Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

Senator Salma Atallahjan, Senator Donald Oliver, Chris Charlton, M.P. and Libby Davies M.P. participated in the 18th meeting of Women Parliamentarians. During the report on gender activities at the IPU, Senator Oliver, in his capacity as a member of the Gender Partnership Group, reported on some key statistics regarding women's

participation in IPU activities and bodies (see his report to the Governing Council). Other agenda items included a follow-up to the adoption of the Plan of Action on Gender-sensitive parliaments, a debate on women in politics, and a dialogue session between men and women on violence against women, in particular sexual violence. A detailed report on the work of the meeting of Women Parliamentarians is available online.⁹

d. Geopolitical Groups Meetings

Article 25 of the Statutes and Rules of the IPU permits members of the IPU to form geopolitical groups. These groups play an important role in the functioning and activities of the IPU.

There are six geopolitical groups formally recognized by the IPU: the African Group (46 members), the Arab Group (19 members), the Asia-Pacific Group (30 members), the Eurasia Group (7 members), the Latin American Group (22 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 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.¹⁰

A meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) was held on 22 March. **Senator Salma Ataullahjan**, and **Blaine Calkins, M.P.** attended the meeting. Agenda items included:

- Briefing by the Group's representatives on the work of the Executive Committee of the IPU;
- Report from ASEAN+3 Group;
- Vacancies to be filled during the 128th IPU Assembly;
- Emergency Item in the Assembly Agenda;
- Nominations to Drafting Committees (Emergency item and Standing Committees); and
- Subject items for the 130th IPU Assembly.

Meetings of the Twelve Plus Group were held on 21, 23, and 27 March. **Senator Salma Ataullahjan**, **Senator Donald Oliver**, **Senator Denis Dawson**, and **Blaine Calkins, M.P.**, attended the different meetings. Agenda items considered included:

- Report from Group representatives on the work of the Sub-committee on Finance and the IPU Executive Committee;
 - As a member of Executive Committee, **Senator Oliver** provided an overview of the key outcomes and discussions that took place during the meetings of March 19th and 20th, including: a report on the activities of the president and of the IPU, and the implementation of the IPU strategy.

⁹ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

¹⁰ Minutes of the meetings of the Asia Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group are available from the Canadian IPU Secretariat upon request.

- Matters relating to the IPU – Amendments to the Statutes and Rules; Procedures for selecting the new Secretary General; Implementation of the IPU Strategy including the Reform of the Standing Committees and Assembly Format;
- Matters relating to the Group of twelve Plus – Application of the Parliament of Ukraine;
- Emergency item;
- Subject items of the Standing Committees and Nominations to Drafting Committees (Emergency item and Standing Committees);
 - **Senator Salma Ataullahjan** presented a status report on the work of the third Standing Committee on behalf of **Chris Charlton, M.P.**, co-rapporteur for the IPU's Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights.
- Meeting of the Women Parliamentarians;
- Vacancies to be filled; and
- Subject items for the 130th IPU Assembly.

e. Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

The meeting of the Advisory Group was held on 26 March. As a member of the Advisory Group, **Senator Dennis Dawson** participated in this meeting. The group discussed the IPU reform, in particular how to enhance the functioning of the IPU Standing Committees and the role of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs. The group also followed up on the field missions by the Advisory Group to examine One UN reform and system-wide coherence. Finally, it discussed the agenda of the annual session of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs that will be held in Geneva in October 2013. A detailed report on the work and decisions of this Advisory Group is available online.¹¹

f. Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

The meeting of the Advisory Group was held on 24 March. As a member of the Advisory Group, **Libby Davies, M.P.** participated in this meeting and was elected chair for a period of one year. Agenda items considered included a presentation of the Advisory Group's new mandate, which was expanded to include maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH). The Group also heard a presentation about the plans and activities of IPU's MNCH project and discussed their role in taking them forward. It also discussed its program of engagement on HIV/AIDS for the coming years, identifying policy areas in which the IPU can have an important impact. Finally, the Group discussed modalities for linking HIV/AIDS and MNCH issues within its mandate. A detailed report on the work and decisions of this Advisory Group is available online.¹²

g. Panel session: The legalization of drugs: Can it help curb organized crime?

The panel session on *The legalization of drugs: Can it help curb organized crime?* focused on the emerging debate on the potential benefits and challenges of the

¹¹ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

¹² See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

legalization (or decriminalization) of drugs. Panelists addressed the successes and challenges of current drug policies in consumer, supplier and transit countries.

Libby Davies, M.P. made an intervention during the question and answer period of the session. She mentioned that there are varying views about this issue in Canada. She presented her own views and referred to her own experience in her riding relating to the criminalization of drug uses. She outlined that she felt that changes and drug policy reforms must come from local governments. **Blaine Calkins, M.P.** also attended the session. A detailed report is available online.¹³

h. Workshop on the theme Ensuring accountability for women's and children's health

At its 126th Assembly, the IPU adopted a resolution on "Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children." One year later, the IPU organized a workshop aimed at showcasing good practices developed by parliaments to implement the IPU resolution and thus promote women's and children's health. The workshop began with a presentation of the findings of a new IPU Report assessing the impact of these measures. The Report demonstrates how, by taking a series of priority actions prescribed in the IPU resolution, parliaments can help advance women's and children's health as a fundamental human right. Senator Atallahjan was asked to present on the expected contribution of this IPU report to national efforts to improve accountability for maternal, new-born and child health. She stated:

It has been one year since we adopted our ground-breaking resolution. Recognition of the important role of parliaments in ensuring national implementation of health commitments and obligations is clearly gaining traction. I would draw attention here to the First Report of the Independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, which stated that: "Parliaments have a critical part to play in supporting the Global Strategy. They represent a powerful accountability tool in their own right to drive progress towards improved women's and children's health."

That same sentiment is echoed in the IPU's initial report on its accountability framework. That report states that, "While everyone has a role to play in advancing the MNCH cause, parliamentarians are privileged in their position. As elected constituency representatives, parliamentarians can reach wide audiences, shape policy and budgets, and ensure funds are used efficiently and effectively."

Given all of the health initiatives that are underway, everyone in this room knows how critical it is that we don't lose sight of the parliamentary component of these efforts. That is why I was so encouraged by the decision of the Governing Council at the 127th Assembly to expand the

¹³ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

mandate of the IPU's Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS to include maternal and child health.

When we were debating the resolution in Kampala, many of us emphasized that we needed to embrace the idea of continuing accountability for our commitments, ensuring that the resolution would remain a living document, and not just another archived link on another website.

In thinking about our priorities as the MDG target date approaches, I would argue that work still remains to be done to address some of the more complex and multi-dimensional challenges that are at the root of poor health outcomes, most particularly - gender inequality and weak human rights protections.

Those areas will arguably be some of the most difficult for us to tackle, so I look forward to a fulsome discussion in our dialogue session. One of the questions we've been asked to consider today is whether parliamentary action is meeting needs and expectations on the ground.

I think a relevant point here, which I also highlighted at a World Health Organization meeting last year, is the need for us to consider parliamentary capacity-building, which is an area in which the IPU can and is performing a critical role.

We need to think about how we can equip individual parliamentarians to perform their key roles of scrutinizing budgetary appropriations and legislation, and to take advantage of tools like parliamentary committees.

After all, as we know, accountability is not only about reporting. It is also about empowering individual parliamentarians so that they can provide that very accountability and oversight, enabling them to push for implementation.

One of the areas we could look at is further strengthening the connections – nationally and internationally - between parliamentarians and health experts. Can we improve upon our efforts to transfer health knowledge, data and best practices to parliamentarians, in a format that is easy to understand and use, and to disseminate to constituents? In other words, we can look at further steps to build connections between technical health experts and those who influence policy.

The IPU accountability report provides us with useful tools and strategies to help us to address these issues. It recommends coordinated action by parliamentary bodies involved in promoting women's and children's health, including non-health parliamentary bodies. It also identifies the need for parliaments to collaborate and build solidarity.

We have all benefitted from the important connections that have been fostered at IPU Assemblies between legislators and key stakeholders, such as the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and the World Health Organization.

I want to close by noting that, in the course of this Assembly, we have been debating the international development agenda, focusing on whether and how democratic governance should be incorporated in the post-2015 framework.

In our efforts to identify what was missing in the original Millennium Development Goal framework, and what needs to be targeted in order to reflect the development realities of the 21st century, we shouldn't lose sight of what has worked and what has galvanized international action, and what still remains to be accomplished.

This point was made recently by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Helen Clark. She told delegates at the 2013 Global MDG Conference in Colombia that, as we debate the framework of the future, "we can't lose sight of the MDGs we have." She went on to say, and I quote, that "Everything learned from what it takes to achieve them is relevant to throwing ourselves behind the global development agenda which follows. It has never been more important to have robust evidence of what makes the MDGs work."

There are less than three years left before December 31st, 2015. As that date draws near, it will be tempting to shift our focus towards the next agenda. While those discussions are critically important, we still have to address the fact that we are, as of right now, not on track to meet the existing MDG on maternal health, despite our recent progress. Both our present challenges and our future objectives are critical and deserve our attention.

This sentiment was expressed in what I felt was the key action item of our 2012 resolution, where we committed to take all possible measures to generate and sustain the political will to achieve the MDGs by 2015, and to put in place the policies and commitments needed for the post-2015 period.

A detailed report of the workshop is available online.¹⁴

i. Workshop on the theme Towards a new vision for sustainable development: What place for democratic governance?

Senator Dennis Dawson participated in this workshop intended to help parliamentarians reflect on democratic governance in its key dimensions and applications. Governments at the United Nations have already agreed to develop a new

¹⁴ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will apply to both developed and developing countries and that will build on the Millennium Development Goals when they expire in 2015. As part of this process, the IPU is gathering the views of parliamentarians on the overall vision and the specific goals of the new development framework. The workshop consisted of short introductory presentations on the general topic, and small group discussions among participants on specific questions including defining the objectives of a possible democratic governance goal that would apply to both developed and developing countries. A detailed report is available online.¹⁵

j. Bilateral meetings

Members of the Canadian delegation held bilateral meetings with delegates from the following countries:

- Ireland;
- Azerbaijan; and
- New Zealand.

6. Follow-up

Following each statutory IPU Assembly the Canadian IPU Group prepares this report, which is tabled in the House of Commons and 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 Salma Ataullahjan, Senator
President, Canadian Group of the IPU

¹⁵ See: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	128 th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings
DESTINATION	Quito, Ecuador
DATES	March 22-27, 2013
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Salma Ataullahjan Hon. Dennis Dawson Hon. Donald H. Oliver, QC
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Blaine Calkins Ms. Chris Charlton Ms. Libby Davies
STAFF	Ms. Line Gravel, Secretary to the Delegation Mr. Frédéric Forge, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 28,165.49
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 16,130.09
HOSPITALITY	\$ 286.76
PER DIEMS	\$ 6,299.04
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 329.50
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 250.00
TOTAL	\$ 51,460.88