



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

CL/209/SR
18 May 2022

Summary records of the Governing Council

209th session

21 and 24 March 2022

BICC, Nusa Dua, Indonesia

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First sitting

**Monday, 21 March 2022
(Morning)**

The sitting was called to order at 09:20, with Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), President of the IPU, in the Chair.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

The President, welcoming participants to the 209th session of the Governing Council, said that he wished to convey the IPU's thanks to the Indonesian authorities for their commendable dedication to organizing the 144th IPU Assembly, which was taking place 15 years after the previous IPU Assembly in Nusa Dua in what were challenging circumstances for all. He was confident, however, that Members would make the concerted efforts required to achieve the anticipated results from the Assembly.

The Secretary General, reiterating those thanks to the Parliament of Indonesia for its gracious organization of the Assembly and its focus on ensuring that proceedings would run smoothly, said that he looked forward to rewarding deliberations in the coming days.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CL/209/A.1-rev)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 208TH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (CL/208/SR)

The summary records of the 208th session of the Governing Council were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 144TH ASSEMBLY

At the proposal of Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates), seconded by Ms. F. Bint Abdulla Zainal (Bahrain), Ms. R. Kavakçı Kan (Türkiye) and Mr. B. Park (Republic of Korea), Ms. P. Maharani (Indonesia) was elected President of the 144th Assembly by acclamation.

Ms. P. Maharani (Indonesia), expressing appreciation and gratitude for the trust placed in her to preside over the 144th IPU Assembly, said that she would endeavour to fulfil that task in a transparent and inclusive manner with a view to fostering agreements of benefit to all IPU Members. In so doing, she would count on the support and cooperation of all IPU Members and staff. The Parliament of Indonesia recognized the important role of diplomacy in building bridges and strengthening cooperation and multilateralism in line with the IPU's objectives. The IPU had proved the effectiveness of parliamentary dialogue in promoting democracy, peace and human rights, in building trust, in accelerating the pandemic recovery and in fostering gender equality, youth empowerment and attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The forthcoming General Debate on *Getting to zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on climate change* would provide an opportunity for Members to contribute to international solidarity on that and related issues by

exchanging differing views and perspectives while maintaining a flexible approach in the interest of consensus. Solutions to shared challenges demanded collective action and support, both of which were essential to the success of the Assembly.

The President, thanking Ms. Maharani for having accepted the nomination, expressed confidence that she would bring her wisdom to the task of presiding over the Assembly and thereby contribute to its success.

Item 4 of the agenda

CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP

The President, introducing the item, said that the Executive Committee had received several requests from organizations seeking permanent observer status at IPU meetings. In view of the large number of similar requests previously granted, however, the Executive Committee had decided to assess the level of engagement and added value brought to the IPU by the organizations currently holding permanent observer status and to develop a clearer and more rigorous methodology for the granting of that status. It therefore proposed that consideration of the requests before it for permanent observer status should be deferred until the 145th Assembly in October 2022.

The Secretary General, further clarifying the matter, said that the Executive Committee's approach was in conformity with paragraph 13 of the practical modalities of the rights and responsibilities of observers at IPU meetings, which provided for an evaluation of the situation of observers every four years. The aim of the evaluation to be conducted in advance of the 145th Assembly was to determine which observers were active and to draw lessons on which to base the consideration of requests for permanent observer status in future.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to agree to the deferral proposed by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 5 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(a) On his activities since the 208th session of the Governing Council

The President, accompanying his report with a digital slide presentation, said that, throughout the period since the 143rd Assembly in November 2021, he had focused in his ongoing activities on the implementation of the new IPU 2022–2026 Strategy adopted at that Assembly. In discussions held during visits that he had conducted to Bahrain, Kazakhstan and Serbia, he had continued, as always, to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, while in his address to the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, in February 2022, he had underscored the role of parliaments in working for a sustainable recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. At the same time, he had highlighted new political approaches exemplified in, among others, the IPU Transparency Report and the 2022–2026 Communications Strategy, which was aligned with the 2022–2026 IPU Strategy and in respect of which the Executive Committee had produced recommendations for endorsement. His efforts to increase the IPU's visibility as a universal organization had additionally included press conferences and a heightened social media presence – both essential tools for the dissemination of IPU values and opinions on important issues. With the aim of further expanding the IPU membership towards universality, the Executive Committee was also preparing for a mission to the United States Congress in Washington D.C. and working to attract new members from the Caribbean and Pacific regions.

Concerning the extraordinary events in Ukraine, in addition to issuing a statement condemning the Russian decision to recognize the independence of the separatist regions in eastern Ukraine and calling for the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy, he had visited Kyiv on 7 February in a demonstration of solidarity with the parliamentarians and people of Ukraine. Following the subsequent Russian invasion of that country, the Executive Committee had issued a strongly worded statement of condemnation in which it had demanded an immediate ceasefire and offered the

IPU's good offices in diplomatic efforts at the parliamentary level. In that context, he had met the Ukrainian Ambassador to Portugal in Lisbon and had spoken by telephone with the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Thanking Turkey for its role as a mediator in the Ukraine crisis, he re-emphasized the IPU position that the war in Ukraine – and with it the suffering of innocents – must be ended forthwith.

The Governing Council took note of the report of the President on his activities since its 208th session and of the Executive Committee's statement on Ukraine.

Item 6 of the agenda

PRESENTATION BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE IPU IMPACT REPORT OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS (2017-2021)

The Secretary General, introducing the item and accompanying his remarks with a digital slide presentation highlighting some of the landmark achievements identified in the IPU Impact Report pertaining to the implementation of the 2017–2021 IPU Strategy, said that the IPU had moved further towards its goal of universal membership during the five-year period covered by the report and had broadened its reach through such measures as the establishment of an IPU office in Vienna. It had also increased its visibility, attracting more visitors than ever to its website and harnessing social media platforms to disseminate the IPU message; made more tools and expert guidance available to assist Members in the discharge of their functions; and promoted its role as a platform for inter-parliamentary dialogue. Many of those advances had taken place in the challenging environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic, despite which IPU activities had continued, largely thanks to the acceleration of the Organization's ongoing digital transformation plans.

The report provided details of the impact achieved in connection with each of the eight strategic objectives set for the period 2017–2021, the first of which was to build strong, democratic parliaments, including through the parliamentary capacity-building and standard-setting and knowledge tools described in the report, such as, in the latter case, the Global Parliamentary Report 2017 on the subject of parliamentary oversight. In respect of strategic objective 2 to advance gender equality and respect for women's rights, the IPU had steadfastly promoted women's political participation, as reflected in its convening of the thirteenth Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament – who included the President of the current Assembly – in Vienna in 2021 and in the rising global proportion of women parliamentarians, currently standing at 26.1 per cent, which was an encouraging figure but pointed to the need for swifter progress. The report also contained examples of the IPU's efforts to prevent violence against women in parliament and to foster gender equality through capacity-building and gender-responsive law-making.

With regard to the protection and promotion of human rights, which constituted strategic objective 3, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had unfortunately seen its workload increase. As detailed in the report, it had successfully resolved some of the cases before it over the preceding five years. As to strategic objective 4 to contribute to peacebuilding, conflict prevention and security, the IPU had served as a platform for mediation and dialogue aimed at the peaceful resolution of conflict in, for example, the Korean peninsula and the Middle East. It had also worked in a sustained manner to raise awareness of terrorism and violent extremism and to develop tools, including an application, a database, and model legislation, to combat both.

The IPU's digital transformation had enabled it to continue throughout the pandemic to promote inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation, which formed strategic objective 5 and was among the IPU's *raison d'être*. Recent examples of activities in that area included the first-ever virtual IPU Assembly in May 2021, followed by the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Vienna in September 2021 and the 143rd Assembly in Madrid in October 2021. With regard to strategic objective 6 to promote youth empowerment, the IPU's profile had grown increasingly younger in terms of the composition of delegations to its meetings and the inclusion of the youth perspective in issues discussed. Nonetheless, only 2.6 per cent of parliamentarians around the world were under 30 years of age, a situation that the IPU was working to rectify through its *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign, to which many world leaders had subscribed in a move that others were encouraged to emulate.

In respect of strategic objective 7 to mobilize parliaments around the global development agenda, the IPU had continued to emphasize the importance of strong parliaments and democracies to the achievement of the SDGs, as exemplified in its efforts to promote parliamentary action to that

end, including through the establishment of dedicated national bodies. The IPU had, in addition, organized a parliamentary meeting on the sidelines of the recent UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow and worked with specialized agencies to develop tools to assist parliaments in combating climate change. Examples of the IPU's work to bridge the gap in international relations, which constituted strategic objective 8, included the Annual Parliamentary Hearings at the United Nations and the G20 Speakers' Summits (P20) organized in Buenos Aires (2018), Tokyo (2019) and most recently in Rome in October 2021, in advance of the UN Climate Change Conference.

Over the preceding five years, the IPU and parliaments alike had proven their resilience and ability to cope in exceptionally challenging circumstances, most notably those created by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the democratic backsliding witnessed in some parts of the world and epitomized in the increasing number of coups d'état, above all in Africa, was deeply regrettable and worrying. The Executive Committee had therefore resolved to explore ways of responding more robustly to that backsliding.

In continuing to fare well and operate throughout the pandemic, the IPU had seen its support base broaden. The increasing number of donors and partners contributing resources towards the IPU's ever-widening range of activities included the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, IrishAid and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), as well as the Parliaments of Angola, Benin, China, the Federated States of Micronesia, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to the Arab Parliament. The IPU would always be pleased for other donors to follow their example. The IPU had also expanded its partnership with UN agencies, with which it worked in their respective areas of expertise to engage with the parliamentary community in the interest of improved outcomes.

In conclusion, the IPU had achieved successes yet still faced challenges, in particular that of reaching out to the entirety of the 46,000 parliamentarians around the world through enhancing its visibility and implementing a more robust communications strategy aimed at the parliamentary community. Digital transformation was another area of challenge in which there was no room for complacency and which was therefore being scaled up. The new 2022–2026 Strategy provided a clear way forward for the IPU, which was intent on an integrated ecosystem approach to its activities and on carefully monitoring progress with a view to changing tack as necessary to ensure even better results in future.

The Governing Council took note of the IPU Impact Report for 2017-2021.

The President, after noting that the increasing number of cases under examination by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was a reflection of the IPU's growing relevance and heightened profile, said in response to comments from **a representative of Yemen** about Yemeni parliamentarians who had been sentenced to death and other penalties following the Houthi takeover of their country that the situation in Yemen would be addressed under a subsequent agenda item.

Observation of a minute of silence

At the invitation of the President, the Governing Council observed a minute of silence in memory of Mr. Jacob Oulanyah, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, who had passed away the previous day.

Item 7 of the agenda

2022–2026 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

(CL/209/7-P.1)

The Secretary General, presenting the IPU's 2022–2026 Communications Strategy set out in document CL/209/7-P.1, said that the accomplishments of the previous communications strategy had been reviewed with the aim of identifying a new way forward towards a clearer articulation of the IPU's vision and its position as a unique global forum for the promotion of parliamentary and global multilateralism. Aligned with the IPU Strategy covering the same five-year period, the new Communications Strategy would be periodically reviewed and, as necessary, revised to ensure that it effectively strengthened the IPU's position as a primary global resource for, about and among parliaments.

To that end, the Communications Strategy identified work streams for targeting all 46,000 parliamentarians worldwide to achieve the desired impact, starting with measures to accelerate the

IPU's digital communications transformation and the use of new and existing tools to disseminate the IPU message. Secondly, the Strategy laid emphasis on more engagement and accountability with IPU stakeholders, all of whom – and in particular Speakers of Parliament and IPU office holders – shared a responsibility to articulate that message in their home countries. Thirdly, the IPU would continue to do its utmost to engage with stakeholders beyond the realm of parliament, as was consistent with the new strategic approach of building a parliamentary ecosystem. The document also highlighted international events in which the IPU should be more actively involved as a means of generating greater interest in its work.

The President, in summarizing the three work streams described for placing parliamentarians at the core of the Communications Strategy, said that it was vital to communicate with those 46,000 parliamentarians, each of whom could in turn spread the IPU message among the wider community. It was also vital, however, to turn words into action by implementing and periodically reviewing the strategy through a defined monitoring and evaluation mechanism to achieve the desired outcome. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the IPU's 2022–2026 Communications Strategy and the related recommendations of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 8 of the agenda

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE RULES OF THE COMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST QUESTIONS
(CL/209/8-P.1)

The Secretary General, drawing attention to the amendment to Rule 2.2 of the Rules of the Committee on Middle East Questions set out in document CL/209/8-P.1, said that the aim of that amendment was to ensure compliance with the rule on gender balance, which had at times been difficult for the Committee to achieve. The reason for that difficulty was that only 12 of the 14 members of the Committee were elected, whereas the remaining 2 were ex officio, meaning that their gender was not a factor. To overcome that difficulty, the Committee had endorsed an amendment stating that no more than six of its elected members – instead of seven as per the previous wording of Rule 2.2 – should be of the same sex.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the amendment endorsed by the Committee on Middle East Questions.

It was so decided.

Item 9 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS
(CL/209/9-P.1)

The President, referring to the future inter-parliamentary meetings listed in document CL/209/9-P.1 and recalling that the 145th Assembly was to be held in Kigali, Rwanda from 9 to 13 October 2022¹, said that the Governing Council was called upon to approve the holding of the 146th Assembly in Manama, Bahrain, from 11 to 15 March 2023, and of the 147th Assembly in Geneva, from 8 to 12 October 2023. Parliaments were nonetheless welcome to come forward with offers to host the latter Assembly should they wish to do so.

The Secretary General said, with respect to the kind offer of the Parliament of Bahrain to host the 146th Assembly, that the IPU had received confirmation of all necessary guarantees pertaining to the issuance of visas for all participants and had dispatched a team to Manama to assess the technical facilities in place for hosting the event.

As to the specialized and other meetings listed in the document, most had already been approved by the Governing Council, which was therefore called upon to approve the remainder. All

¹ The dates were subsequently changed to 11 to 15 October 2022 to take account of the P20 meeting in Jakarta on 6 and 7 October 2022.

such meetings were funded from core or external resources, were consistent with the priorities identified in the new IPU Strategy, and would take place either in person, including in some cases at venues yet to be identified, or virtually, in conformity with the IPU's new digital transformation policy. Of particular note was the Eighth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians to be hosted by the Parliament of Egypt in May 2022. Full details of all meetings would be made available on the IPU's website.

Ms. R. Kavakçı Kan (Türkiye), highlighting the relevance of the parliamentary conference on migration in the Mediterranean to the crisis in Ukraine, said that her Parliament was set to welcome participants to the conference, due to take place in Istanbul from 9 to 10 June 2022.

The President, noting the importance of the discussions at that conference to all individuals fleeing crisis situations around the world, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the list of future inter-parliamentary meetings, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Appointment of an internal auditor

The President said that the internal auditor appointed at the 206th session of the Governing Council, Ms. S. Moulengui-Mouélé of Gabon, was unable to continue in that role as she was no longer a parliamentarian. To avoid a recurrence of a situation in which the IPU might find itself without an internal auditor for a variety of reasons, the Executive Committee had requested that, as provided for in the Statutes of the IPU, two internal auditors should always be appointed in future. In the interim, Ms. L. Fehlmann Rielle of Switzerland, who, as a former member of Executive Committee, was familiar with the financial situation of the IPU, had kindly offered her candidacy as the internal auditor for the 2021 accounts. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve Ms. Fehlmann Rielle's nomination for the position, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The President expressed special thanks to Ms. Fehlmann Rielle for her acceptance of that position in the exceptional circumstances that had arisen.

Announcement of the quorum for the session

The Secretary General announced that, in conformity with Rule 34.2 of the Governing Council, a quorum of 60 had been established for the current session on the basis of the number of members or substitutes participating in the first meeting, which amounted to 118.

The sitting rose at 10:55.

Second sitting

Thursday, 24 March 2022
(Morning)

The sitting was called to order at 09:15, with Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), President of the IPU, in the Chair.

Item 5 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT (continued)

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President, in reporting on the activities of the Executive Committee, said that the Committee had examined the findings of a study commissioned by the IPU to assess how it had fared in its engagement with the United Nations over the preceding 20 years. It had supported those findings and the accompanying 10 recommendations as the way forward to further enhance the parliamentary dimension of the work of the UN.

On another note, the Executive Committee had emphasized the need for Member Parliaments to ensure that their delegations systematically included any parliamentarian who had been appointed to an IPU office.

The Governing Council took note of the report of the President on the activities of the Executive Committee.

Item 10 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2021 (CL/209/10-R.1, R.2 and R.3)

Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), member of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, presenting the IPU's financial report and audited financial statements set out in document CL/209/10/R.1, together with the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2022 set out in document CL/209/10/R.2, said that the IPU was fortunate in the present times of uncertainty to enjoy the financial health and security needed to manage crises effectively and achieve set goals. The fact was that Members, in a demonstration of their faith in the IPU's relevance and notwithstanding the economic and other difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, had continued to pay their assessed contributions to the IPU. She thanked all members of the Sub-Committee on Finance for their tireless and painstaking efforts to address issues of importance to Members and also thanked the Secretary General and his financial team for engaging in those efforts and working to ensure full transparency and accountability.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors in performing a sterling job, the IPU's External Auditor, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, as indicated in his report contained in section 9 of document CL/209/10/R.1, had formed a positive opinion of the audited financial statements for 2021 and of their accuracy in confirming the strength of the IPU's financial management. Owing to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, the audit had been carried out remotely with the support of the IPU's financial team. The resulting four recommendations detailed in the Internal Auditor's report set out in document CL/209/10-R.3 – none of them indicative of any shortcomings – had been taken on board and would further enhance the IPU's financial management. Given the Sub-Committee's involvement in all aspects of the IPU's finances, it would perhaps be better renamed in future the Sub-Committee on Finance and Audit.

Key points worth highlighting from the financial report and audited financial statements for 2021 included the operating surplus of CHF 378,270, which pointed to the IPU's healthy financial situation. The impact of COVID-19 had been less felt than in 2020, and travel costs had increased in 2021 with the resumption of in-person meetings, such as the 143rd Assembly in Madrid. Three quarters of the IPU's revenue was derived from assessed contributions, which were used for the direct funding of strategic activities, and the remaining quarter came from voluntary contributions. Thanks to the size of

the operating surplus, the liquid portion of the Working Capital Fund had, for the first time, reached the target level set by the Executive Committee in 2006 at one half of the approved annual operating budget. The amount set aside was vital to strengthening the Organization's resilience in the face of future crises now considered inevitable.

As noted at the previous Assembly, total assessed contributions had remained at the same level as they had been 15 years previously. Albeit that the IPU was working towards the goal of universal membership, it was time to rebalance that level in the light of the new IPU Strategy, future challenges, rising costs and inflation. The budget discussions for the coming year would therefore be aimed at achieving a gradual return to the total contribution level of 2010 so as to secure adequate financing for delivering on the IPU's new strategic objectives while simultaneously strengthening the IPU's relevance and, in the longer term, its ability to cover rising costs and salaries. Input from Members concerning their respective needs and possibilities would be welcome.

The total amount of arrears in assessed contributions continued to increase, with 10 Members and Associate Members currently at risk of having their membership rights suspended. As always, the IPU would continue to monitor the situation of those Members and to work with them individually, including through the geopolitical groups, with a view to ensuring their ongoing enjoyment of those rights.

As to the welcome rise in voluntary funding, it was indicative of – and attributable to – the IPU's enduring relevance for parliaments and international organizations, among others. The level of income from assessed contributions nonetheless remained fixed at 75 per cent, thereby ensuring in combination with the IPU's transparency and accountability that the Organization was never open to the possibility of outside influence. In working towards its new strategic objectives, the strength and relevance of the IPU as a modern global organization rested in no small part on the health of its finances, which the Sub-Committee would do its utmost to safeguard. The Executive Committee recommended that the Governing Council approve the financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2021.

Ms. L. Fehlmann Rielle (Switzerland), internal auditor, in delivering her report set out in document CL/209/10-R/3, including details of the four recommendations made by the External Auditor, said that the latter had confirmed the accuracy and quality of the IPU's financial statements. She joined the Executive Committee in recommending that the Governing Council approve the financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2021 which were sound and healthy.

The Secretary General, expressing thanks for the reports from Ms. Widegren and Ms. Fehlmann Rielle confirming the IPU's healthy financial position, said that the information set out in document CL/209/10/R.2 on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2022, including with respect to voluntary contributions, confirmed that the financial situation remained sound, even despite the heightened market volatility prompted by the Ukraine crisis. While revenues and expenditures remained essentially on target, Members and Associate Members liable for suspension of their rights – specifically, the Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), the Andean Parliament and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) – were urged to settle their arrears in the payment of their contributions in the interest of maintaining the existing healthy balance between those core contributions and external funding. The geopolitical groups were also urged to engage in encouraging those concerned to honour their financial obligations towards the Organization.

The IPU remained grateful for the robust contributions of funding in support of its ever-widening range of activities and invited similar contributions from others. Amounting to just over one quarter of the total budget, such funding had been received from SIDA, which was poised to renew its long-standing funding arrangement with the IPU; the Parliament of Qatar, which had contributed a sum of US\$ 2 million towards overall activities; and the Canadian Government, which had provided CHF 1.5 million over three years towards the promotion of gender equality through parliamentary capacity-building, an area also supported by funding from IrishAid. Support had been provided in addition by the World Health Organization (WHO) for health-related initiatives; by the Parliament of Angola for work on maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health; by the National People's Congress of China for activities relating to the SDGs and to counter-terrorism, with funding also provided towards combating the latter by the Parliaments of Bangladesh, Benin and the United Arab Emirates; by the European Union for parliamentary capacity-building in Djibouti, with a particular focus on human rights; by the Micronesian Parliament for activities in the areas of climate change, migration and governance; and by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) – a long-standing partner of the IPU – for parliamentary capacity-building worldwide.

As to support in kind, the Parliament of the Republic of Korea had for many years been seconding staff to the IPU in a mutually beneficial arrangement. All Members were invited to consider providing similar support, as the Parliament of Austria had done by seconding an ambassador to serve as head of the IPU office in Vienna.

The President, again highlighting the fact that assessed contributions had remained static for the previous 15 years, expressed thanks to all those who had worked to ensure that the IPU had continued to operate to the same standard throughout that time.

Mr. K. Tanaka (Japan) said that many countries, including Japan, were currently experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and that the IPU must therefore seek to preclude any increase in assessed contributions by undertaking an in-depth reform aimed at enhancing the efficient use of the budget through financial streamlining. With a view to cost reduction, IPU meetings and projects should be scrutinized for duplication and the senior management salary structure should also be reviewed. Moreover, the number of staff posts held by Japanese nationals should be increased in proportion to the sum of Japanese contributions to the IPU. Japan would continue its close monitoring of the IPU's activities.

Mr. G. Mohaba Messu (Equatorial Guinea) said that his Parliament had always steadfastly supported the IPU in its efforts to disseminate the values of democracy, human rights, good governance and peaceful coexistence. It therefore looked forward to resuming its voluntary contributions towards those efforts once it had recovered from the unprecedented economic crisis fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The President, responding to points raised and emphasizing the need for careful monitoring and improvement wherever possible, said that it was only thanks to its efficiency that the IPU had been able to accomplish what it had with a constant level of assessed contributions since 2007, rising costs notwithstanding. As to the duplication of activities, it might be perceived to occur in instances where, for example, a series of regional meetings were held on the same topic. Such meetings, however, saved on costs for delegates, many of whom would otherwise need to travel long distances if only one meeting were convened to address a particular topic.

Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) said that there had been no increase in IPU staff salaries since 2007, albeit that living costs in Geneva had risen in the interim. As an important part of the IPU family, staff members should be treated fairly and be adequately protected as opposed to having their salaries reviewed in a cost-saving exercise.

Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), member of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, underlining the importance of efficiency, said that the IPU staff worked persistently to extract maximum benefit from the funds available for activities. For its part, the Executive Committee endeavoured to achieve added value for Members from those funds, which in the coming phase would involve a targeted focus on the IPU's five new strategic objectives to ensure the delivery of efficient and high-quality outcomes. It was also important to reduce the IPU's environmental footprint by minimizing paper use and, where possible, travel, as well as by holding more hybrid and digital meetings.

The Secretary General, thanking the representative of Japan for his constructive comments, said that the assessed contributions payable had remained stable thanks to the IPU's commitment to achieving efficiencies. The IPU would continue to strengthen the measures in place to that end and to monitor its financial performance management. As an international organization competing for staff with United Nations Common System members, it was obliged to offer employment conditions and benefits that would attract the best qualified and most experienced candidates. With the IPU Secretariat already stretched to the limit, its staff numbers should – if anything – be increased so that it could best deliver on the broad and ever-growing mandate entrusted to it. The IPU would continue to expand and diversify the geographical origins of its staff. Their recruitment, however, was ultimately based on their experience and qualifications, without reference to the size of contributions made by Member Parliaments, which would be contrary to the rules in place. In short, the IPU was fully committed to diversity and to a focus on skills, experience and expertise with a view to recruiting a complement of staff who were competent to deliver on the mandate assigned to the IPU by its Members.

Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), welcoming the confirmation of the IPU's sound financial position, said that IPU staff members consistently demonstrated commendable commitment to continuing their work unabated, despite having received no incremental rises in salary in recent memory. Although its staff turnover was very low, it would behove the IPU to factor into its budget discussions the type of salary and benefits packages that would enhance motivation and job satisfaction. Otherwise noting that a member of the Executive Committee, Ms. E. Anyakun of Uganda, had volunteered to serve as one of the IPU's two internal auditors, he suggested that other volunteers might wish to put their names forward as candidates for the second position.

The Secretary General said by way of clarification that the two internal auditors appointed at the previous Assembly for the 2022 accounts would be succeeded at the 145th Assembly by two internal auditors for the 2023 accounts. Ms. Anyakun's candidacy for one of those positions had been duly noted.

The President, after reiterating the importance of appointing two internal auditors to avoid the possibility of being left with no internal auditor, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2021.

It was so decided.

Item 11 of the agenda

SITUATION OF CERTAIN PARLIAMENTS

The Secretary General, accompanying his overview of the situation of certain parliaments with a digital slide presentation, said with reference to Afghanistan that there had been no functioning parliament in that country since the Taliban takeover. Many parliamentarians had fled and were operating as a parliament in exile, with which the IPU would continue to work in a symbolic gesture, given that IPU membership was open only to parliaments that functioned within the territory of a sovereign State. An Afghan delegation was attending the current Assembly in an observer capacity, with the hope that the situation would improve as time went on. On the humanitarian side, the IPU was working with parliaments and other entities to identify potential avenues through which to address the dire situation of Afghan women and girls in particular.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the Executive Committee's recommendation that the IPU should continue to recognize the Afghan Parliament as its main interlocutor and support its participation in IPU activities in a non-voting capacity, with no rights for its members to hold any IPU office.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said that there was also no functioning parliament in Myanmar and that the IPU had in recent years been constructively engaged with the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which was the parliament in exile. The Executive Committee recommended that the same course of action should be taken in the case of Myanmar as in that of Afghanistan.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the Executive Committee's recommendation that the IPU should continue to recognize the CRPH as its main interlocutor and support its participation in IPU activities in a non-voting capacity, with no rights for its members to hold any IPU office.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General said with respect to the situation in Burkina Faso that the country's parliament had been dissolved following the coup d'état that had taken place in early 2022. A transitional arrangement had been put in place that include a transitional charter and a 71-member transitional legislative assembly with a civilian Speaker for a 36-month period. The situation was similar to that of Mali, regarding which the Governing Council had previously taken a position. The Executive Committee recommended that the Governing Council apply the same treatment to this transitional parliament as had been applied to Mali. While the Executive Committee condemned the coup d'état, it had taken note of the establishment of the transitional parliament and recommended that the IPU continue to work with it with a view to developing a road map for a speedy return to normality.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve that course of action recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, continuing his remarks with an update on the IPU's monitoring of the situation of certain other parliaments, said that no transitional parliament had yet been established in Sudan following the two coups d'état witnessed in that country since April 2019. In the absence of any indication of when elections there might eventually be scheduled, the Executive Committee had decided to suspend the Parliament of Sudan from the IPU membership, which now comprised 178 parliaments as a result.

In Guinea, which was experiencing a similar situation to Mali, the IPU was continuing to monitor the situation and engage with the authorities, including the country's ambassador in Geneva, to ensure that the transitional parliament established following the coup d'état in 2021 was working robustly towards the restoration of constitutional rule. The IPU hoped in the coming weeks to embark on a programme of cooperation with the parliament to that end.

In the case of Libya, with its two prime ministers and two election timelines, the situation was intractable and lacked all clarity. The Tobruk-based transitional parliament recognized as the IPU Member had difficulty functioning in those circumstances and its delegation to the current Assembly had not materialized for reasons as yet unknown. He would report back to the Executive Committee and the Governing Council on further developments in the light of a recent communication received from the Speaker of that parliament indicating that he and the leaders of the Tobruk-based Government wished to have a face-to-face meeting with the IPU in Geneva to discuss the situation.

Concerning Mali, the IPU had worked with the transitional parliament established following the coup d'état in 2020 to develop a road map for the institution of legislative reforms that would pave the way for a return to constitutional rule. Following concern over deadlines, it now appeared that no elections would be held until 2025. The IPU would continue to monitor the situation and to provide capacity-building support to the transitional parliament, including with a view to the establishment of a new constitution reflecting the will of the Malian people.

In respect of Tunisia, where the Parliament had been suspended by its President in July 2021, the IPU had continued to monitor the situation while also conveying its concerns through the Tunisian ambassador in Geneva about the country's lack of constitutional order and offering its support towards the creation of a new constitutional framework. It would report in due course on developments in that respect and was meanwhile engaging with the Tunisian authorities on cases involving violations of the human rights of Tunisian parliamentarians.

Mr. P.F. Casini (Italy), Honorary IPU President, said that the complexity of the situation in Tunisia, including in the light of progress achieved from the Arab Spring, warranted special in-depth monitoring by the IPU, which was also well placed to play a mediating role among the parties concerned.

The Secretary General, welcoming Mr. Casini's proposals, noted that the IPU's engagement with the Tunisian authorities and its statements on the situation in Tunisia had always been very much along those lines. Continuing his update, he said that, in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), the opposition parliament elected in 2015 had continued to sit despite the subsequent election of a pro-Government parliament in late 2020. The IPU mission conducted to Venezuela in August 2021 had concluded that neither parliament qualified for IPU membership, the mandate of one of them having expired and the members of the other having been elected in dubious conditions inconsistent with the constitutional rules in place in Venezuela.

The IPU meanwhile continued to engage in dialogue with both parliaments, which were permitted to attend IPU proceedings in an observer capacity – on condition that the delegation was composed of members from each of the two – until such time as parliamentary elections were once again held in consistency with constitutional rules. On a positive note, recent indications were that the Venezuelan Government and opposition were preparing to resume their suspended talks in the near future under Mexican auspices. The IPU stood ready to offer its good offices as necessary in that context and hoped that dialogue would prevail in helping the Venezuelans to resolve their situation.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the IPU was alert to the possibility of an explosive situation were the peace process in that country to unravel as a result of internal conflict in which one of the two entities established under the 1995 Dayton Agreement was threatening to cease compliance on grounds of discrimination against it. The IPU would continue to monitor the situation with a view to recommending a course of action should it become critical.

With regard to the situation in Chad, there was some degree of continuity in the sense that the Transitional National Council established in October 2021 following the death of the country's former President was essentially composed of members of the outgoing parliament at that time. The Chadian authorities had assured the IPU of their commitment to a return to constitutional rule at the earliest opportunity, although elections were likely to be delayed while a broad-based consultation took place to ensure that the country's new constitution and electoral provisions were in line with the expectations of the Chadian people. The IPU was meanwhile continuing its technical assistance to Chad in the form of parliamentary capacity-building.

Concerning Eswatini, where protests demanding political reform had intensified, the trials of two parliamentarians arrested in July 2021 had been repeatedly delayed. In February 2022, furthermore, the State opening of the country's Parliament had taken place amid such protests. In the absence of the promised national dialogue to resolve the protesters' demands, the IPU continued to engage with the Eswatini authorities and would also continue to report on the situation.

Mr. N.F. Shivambu (South Africa) said that he would welcome information concerning specific action that the IPU intended to take vis-à-vis the situation described in Eswatini.

The Secretary General said that Eswatini had been placed on the IPU's watch list as an early warning of a potential hotspot of concern where political developments might affect the functioning of the country's Parliament. There was as yet no indication, however, that the constitutional order had been disrupted in Eswatini; its Parliament was operating as normal, despite the crisis situation, and an Eswatini delegation was attending the current Assembly. The IPU stood ready to assist as required in promoting a national dialogue in Eswatini to resolve the issues at stake. Meanwhile, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was seized of the case of the two arrested parliamentarians and would report on the matter under a subsequent agenda item.

Mr. N.F. Shivambu (South Africa) said that there was no functioning democracy in Eswatini, where the ruling monarchy exercised absolute power, including over the executive, and political space was lacking. Political parties were banned and those calling for democratic reforms were routinely arrested or forced into exile. For all those reasons and more, the IPU should give special attention to the situation.

The President said that the IPU always advocated respect for constitutional order and that its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was devoted to examining specific cases, including in Eswatini.

The Secretary General said that the observations of the South African representative were well taken and proved that the IPU was warranted in placing Eswatini on its watch list. The IPU was always careful to refrain, however, from forming qualitative judgements about the constitutional order in any particular country. While recognizing that all countries were entitled to decide on their form of government, the key point for the IPU was to ensure that the functioning of parliaments was not impeded. The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians therefore diligently prosecuted cases brought before it of parliamentarians who had been arrested on account of the performance of their parliamentary duties, making recommendations accordingly for resolving the situation and ensuring that there was no denial of due process for such parliamentarians. The IPU would continue to monitor the situation in Eswatini and make recommendations for action as necessary.

In the case of Guinea-Bissau, the ongoing wrangling between the Government and parliament was affecting the latter's ability to function as normal as well as the ability of the IPU to provide technical capacity-building support. The President of the IPU stood ready to use his good offices to promote a resolution of that worrying situation through dialogue.

In Haiti, with a non-existent lower house and only 10 of 30 senators sitting, there was still no functioning parliament. The IPU was continuing to monitor the situation and to call for elections, which thus far had been prevented by the sustained political crisis, to take place as soon as possible.

With regard to Palestine, the Palestine Legislative Council had been dissolved in 2018 with a view to elections that had not yet taken place. The hope was that dates for such elections would be announced in the near future. By contrast, a new Speaker of the Palestine National Council (PNC), which was the country's overall legislative body, with IPU membership, had recently been elected, giving rise to the hope that a PNC delegation would be in attendance at future Assemblies.

In respect of South Sudan, the country was on track to hold elections in 2023, albeit with a possible delay, and a transitional parliament composed of a cross-section of the country's political classes was in place. The IPU understood that the members of that parliament had been increased

from 400 to 550 to accommodate all relevant political parties in the country's governance structure and was providing capacity-building assistance. The IPU's *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign had also been endorsed by the Speaker and activities to promote youth participation in politics were being organized with IPU support.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, limitations had made for little progress in the constitution-making process under way. The IPU encouraged the Syrian parliamentarians attending the current Assembly to do their utmost to expedite that process with a view to developing a constitution that complied with the expectations of the Syrian people so as to help in resolving the ongoing crisis in the country.

Lastly, in Yemen, there had been no major developments in the situation. The Seiyun-based parliament represented at the current Assembly was urged to mobilize all parliamentarians in Yemen to resolve that situation, with a particular focus on the humanitarian crisis. For its part, the Yemeni delegation to the Assembly had expressed its hope that the IPU would bring together relevant stakeholders to identify action that would truly help to end the plight of the Yemeni people. The IPU would report back in due course on the outcome of its consultations on that score.

Noting that the Governing Council's review of the situation of certain parliaments was a key component of its work, his concluding comment was that the Executive Committee had expressed deep concern over what it saw as an epidemic of coups d'état challenging the world. It was vital for the IPU to reflect thoroughly on how to position itself in the face of that worrying trend, such as by engaging more robustly with regional parliamentary institutions and other stakeholders to better understand the dynamics at stake so that it could contribute sustainably to addressing the current global democratic crisis. The President of the IPU had, for instance, engaged in fruitful discussions as to how the IPU might help towards resolving the situation in Myanmar, the hope being that positive developments would ensue.

The President, emphasizing that the IPU would continue its efforts to promote the earliest possible return to constitutional order in countries around the world, said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the update provided by the Secretary General concerning the IPU's monitoring of the situation of certain parliaments.

It was so decided.

Item 12 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

(CL/209/12-R.1 and P.1)

The President, introducing the item, said that the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was imbued with special importance in view of its unique mandate to address violations of the human rights of parliamentarians. That fact had been highlighted by the current President of the United Nations General Assembly, who had expressed profuse thanks to the IPU as the only institution to have fought for his freedom following his arrest while serving as a parliamentarian in his home country of Maldives.

Mr. S. Cogolati (Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), presenting the draft decisions set out in document CL/209/12-R.1, said that, during its session, the Committee had held 10 hearings, in the course of which it had met with authorities as well as complainants and a United Nations independent expert. He thanked all of those who had taken the time to respond to the Committee's invitation by videoconference and in person.

During its session, the Committee had examined the situation of 253 parliamentarians (22 per cent of whom were women) in 14 countries. It had also adopted admissibility decisions in a new case concerning Ms. Talíria Petrone, a parliamentarian from Brazil, and in another new case in Brazil.

However, the draft decisions that he would present for approval by the Governing Council concerned 217 parliamentarians in 9 countries.

Before presenting those draft decisions, he wished to mention the collaboration between the Committee and the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians. During the current session, the two bodies had had the opportunity to strengthen their cooperation in dealing with cases of violence against women. The Committee welcomed that opportunity and hoped to continue exploring the possibilities open to it to better support women parliamentarians who were victims of human rights violations.

Belarus

The first draft decision concerned the case of Mr. Lebedko, a member of parliament from Belarus. The Committee had had the opportunity to meet with the complainant and a member of the lower house of the Parliament of Belarus during the session, and thanked them for the information provided.

Mr. Lebedko's case had been reopened by the Committee in 2021. Mr. Lebedko was one of the members of the 13th Supreme Soviet of Belarus who were the target of a series of reprisals because of their opposition to President Lukashenko between 1996 and 2000. The Committee had reopened the case following a new complaint alleging complete impunity for the perpetrators of the multiple violations alleged by the complainant, including, *inter alia*, torture, arbitrary arrests, violations of the right to freedom of assembly, the right to work, the right to take part in political life and the right to a fair trial.

The Committee noted with concern the complainant's allegation that the legal provisions that gave rise to the above-mentioned violations had not been brought into line with Belarus' international human rights obligations and had continued to be the source of numerous violations 20 years after the events. The Committee called on the Belarusian parliamentary authorities to end impunity in the case and to review Belarusian legislation to ensure that such violations did not recur in the future.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Anatoly Lebedko.

Ecuador

The Committee had examined a collective case concerning seven Ecuadorian parliamentarians, which it was bringing to the attention of the Council for the first time.

The Committee thanked the Ecuadorian delegation for the information provided and for participating in a hearing before the Committee during the present Assembly. The Committee noted with concern that legal proceedings were under way against three opposition parliamentarians, Ms. Desintonio, Ms. Cabezas and Ms. Astudillo, in connection with their parliamentary activities. The Committee wished to receive official and detailed information on the facts underlying the charges against those three parliamentarians, as well as on the administrative proceedings against Mr. Jarrin, which had led to the temporary suspension of his parliamentary mandate, and the proceedings initiated against Mr. Muñoz, both of whom were also members of the opposition.

The Committee was also concerned at the discriminatory and sexist nature of the disparaging messages and comments received by Ms. Palacios, Ms. Veloz, Ms. Desintonio, Ms. Cabezas and Ms. Astudillo. The Committee affirmed that the National Assembly had the opportunity to make a decisive contribution to the prevention of all forms of violence against women, including online violence, and to create conditions conducive to the effective and timely investigation into and punishment of such acts.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of seven Ecuadorian parliamentarians.

Egypt

The Committee had again considered the case of the former Egyptian member of parliament, Mr. Mostafa al-Nagar, who had been missing for almost three years. The Committee welcomed the cooperation of the Egyptian authorities, in particular the hearing with Mr. Karim Darwish, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Egyptian House of Representatives.

Despite the Committee's constructive exchange with the representative of the Egyptian delegation and the information provided, the Committee remained convinced that the Egyptian State could make more efforts to locate Mr. al-Nagar, in particular by opening an investigation into his disappearance so that his family could finally find out what had become of him.

Mr. K. Darwish (Egypt), stressing the strong commitment of the Egyptian Parliament to full respect for human rights and its unwavering support for the realization of those rights for all, including parliamentarians, said that his delegation firmly rejected the draft decision concerning Mr. al-Nagar and the manner in which the Committee conducted its business. The previous day, he had willingly and in good faith responded to the Committee's request for him to engage with it in an open and frank discussion about the case of Mr. al-Nagar. Regrettably, however, the draft decision on that case indicated that he had been mistaken in his understanding of the Committee as an impartial and professional body that worked with integrity.

First, the Committee had built the case on false pretexts and fabricated allegations unsubstantiated by evidence. The Committee had also failed adequately to verify or cross-check information that it had received nor had it clarified his questions about its verification methods. The Egyptian Parliament had fully welcomed the Committee's efforts to engage with it, responding with a comprehensive 12-page letter to all points and questions raised by the Committee, an English copy of which had also been provided to the Committee the day before its sitting.

The Committee had nonetheless failed to take on board, in its summary of the case and in the related draft decision, the authoritative information and substantiated arguments provided to it by the Egyptian Parliament. Both texts contained information and statements that were factually incorrect, based as they were on unverified allegations. The draft decision must therefore be redrafted to incorporate all the facts and information provided by the Egyptian side. Most worryingly of all, the draft decision did not comply with the Statutes and Rules of the IPU, as it set out a subjective opinion on the case of Mr. al-Nagar, which was an extremely alarming development, serving neither the purposes nor the objectives of the Committee and running counter to the principles of professionalism and impartiality. The Egyptian Parliament adhered to the principle of respect for constitutional rules as a main pillar of its work and called on the IPU to do likewise.

Mr. S. Cogolati (Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), reiterating the Committee's thanks to the Egyptian authorities for their cooperation and frank and transparent discussion with it about the case of Mr. al-Nagar, said that, as reflected in the draft decision, the Egyptian position had been duly noted. In particular, the enforced disappearance of Mr. al-Nagar was not a conclusion drawn by the Committee but an allegation or fear. The aim, therefore, was to find Mr. al-Nagar by directing all efforts – those of the Egyptian authorities included – towards identifying his whereabouts, as also requested by his family.

The President said that the texts in question should be redrafted as necessary to include any missing facts that had been provided.

The Secretary General, reiterating the thanks expressed to the Egyptian authorities for their spirit of cooperation to resolve issues through dialogue with the Committee, said that the Governing Council had no desire to adopt decisions that were factually inaccurate. The Committee would therefore undoubtedly be willing to review and amend the preamble to the draft decision, which was understood to be the text at issue. The operative paragraphs were not in question and would remain unaltered.

On that understanding, the Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Mostafa al-Nagar.

Eswatini

The Committee was reporting to the Governing Council for the first time on the situation of three parliamentarians in Eswatini. Two of them had been held in detention on terrorism charges since July 2021, and the third had fled the country before an arrest warrant had been issued against him.

The two detained members of parliament had been arrested after they had called for democratic reforms, which was a legitimate demand. The Speaker of the Assembly had provided the Committee with valuable information on their situation. The Committee had been told that their parliamentary immunity had been respected and that their conditions of detention were good. However, the reply of the Speaker of the Assembly had done nothing to erase the Committee's doubts about how parliamentarians could be accused of terrorism.

That was why the Committee would like to send an observer to their trial and report back to the Governing Council in the near future on whether their fundamental rights were being respected.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of three Eswatini parliamentarians.

Libya

The Committee was submitting a new decision to the Governing Council concerning the case of Ms. Seham Sergiwa, a Libyan parliamentarian who had been violently abducted from her home two years earlier. To date, there was no information on what had become of her and the authorities had still not provided any concrete information on the status of the investigation into her disappearance.

The recent findings of the United Nations' Independent Fact-Finding Mission and the concerns expressed by the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Libya confirmed the Committee's findings. The latter would do its utmost to establish cooperation with those two UN mechanisms in order to reach a satisfactory resolution of Ms. Sergiwa's case.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Ms. Seham Sergiwa.

Myanmar

The Committee had once again examined the situation of parliamentarians in Myanmar, where 62 members of parliament had been subjected to reprisals for their parliamentary work following the military takeover in March 2021. Around 30 of them were being held incommunicado in worrying conditions, according to the report of torture and inhumane conditions of detention by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar. The Committee had had the opportunity to meet with the Special Rapporteur at a hearing during the session, and wished to thank him for the valuable information he had provided to the Committee. It joined him in his call for solidarity with the people of Myanmar and their elected parliamentarians through more concrete joint actions of support. The Committee also invited the Governing Council to show solidarity with their colleagues by supporting the International Parliamentarians Alliance for Myanmar.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of 62 Myanmar parliamentarians.

Uganda

The Committee first wished to thank the Ugandan delegation for meeting with the members of the Committee during the current Assembly.

The Committee had again considered the situation of five Ugandan parliamentarians who had been violently arrested and tortured in August 2018. The Committee reiterated its long-standing concerns relating to the impunity surrounding those events and urged the Ugandan authorities to take decisive action, in line with the recommendations made in the Committee's 2020 mission report, to ensure that the allegations of torture were fully and effectively investigated, followed by the taking of whatever steps were warranted as a result against those responsible.

The Committee had also examined a new situation in Uganda, concerning two opposition members of parliament who were currently in detention, Mr. Allan Ssewanyana and Mr. Muhammad Ssegirinya. The Committee was deeply concerned about the continued detention of those members of parliament, in view of the worrying allegations concerning their conditions of detention and mistreatment while in custody and the alleged deterioration in their state of health. The Committee urged the national authorities to take all necessary steps to ensure that they both had full enjoyment of their rights, in particular their rights to life and to physical integrity, to benefit from judicial guarantees and to receive the necessary medical care.

The Committee wished to send a delegation to Uganda as soon as possible so that it could visit the detained members of parliament, gather information on the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the Committee's 2020 mission report and continue dialogue with the national authorities with a view to promoting a satisfactory settlement of the Ugandan cases. The Committee thanked the Ugandan delegation for the assurances of support it had given in that regard.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the two draft decisions relating, respectively, to the cases of five Ugandan parliamentarians and to the cases of two Ugandan parliamentarians.

Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President of the IPU, took the Chair.

Palestine

The Committee had again examined the case of Mr. Marwan Barghouti, a former Palestinian member of parliament who had been detained after an unfair trial, as concluded by Mr. Simon Foreman, the legal expert appointed by the IPU, in his 2003 report on Mr. Barghouti's trial.

The Committee remained concerned about the violations to which Mr. Barghouti had been subjected in the early years of his detention, in particular the allegations of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment to which he had allegedly been subjected and which had never been examined by the Israeli authorities.

The Committee would continue to examine the case and to keep up its efforts to re-engage in direct dialogue with the Israeli authorities with a view to resolving it.

Mr. A. Dicter (Israel) said that Mr. Barghouti had been elected as a parliamentarian while serving five sentences of life imprisonment for convictions of murder and that the IPU must not become a resort for arch-terrorists, who should be unable to serve as parliamentarians under any circumstances. Unlike Israelis imprisoned in Palestine, Mr. Barghouti had been permitted from the outset to be visited by delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He called on all Members to reject the Committee's account of the case.

Mr. S. Cogolati (Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians) said in taking due note of those remarks that the Committee operated on the principle that all parliamentarians, irrespective of the accusations against them, had the right to a fair trial and adequate conditions of detention as well as the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The Committee remained continually open to dialogue with the Israeli authorities and stood ready to conduct a mission to Israel in order to meet with all concerned parties, including humanitarian organizations and Mr. Barghouti himself, which could lead to it taking a new decision on the case.

Mr. A. Dicter (Israel), stressing that the Israeli justice system was globally respected, said that, as the court records would show, Mr. Barghouti had undeniably received a fair trial. The Committee's failure to respond to the numerous letters addressed to it by his delegation, which had also met with it at the present Assembly, was unacceptable. He wished to know whether the Committee's remit included the defence of convicted terrorists who had been elected as parliamentarians only after being convicted.

Mr. S. Cogolati (Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), said that the Committee was an independent body composed of members elected by the Governing Council. It was examining 685 cases of parliamentarians in 47 countries – or 1 in 4 of all countries – and defending the human rights of those parliamentarians, regardless of the charges against them.

The Secretary General said that, in their dialogue with the Israeli authorities, the IPU and the Committee had emphasized that they did not defend criminals who broke the law but parliamentarians as members of an institution that should function unimpeded in any democracy. Impartial and independent in its defence of parliamentarians who had been prosecuted on account of the performance of their parliamentary duties, the Committee was always anxious to ensure that such parliamentarians enjoyed due process and fair trial rights. Its role was not to defend terrorists but to see to it that parliamentarians were able to perform their duties as mandated by the people. Evidently, any parliamentarian found guilty of an offence following their prosecution in accordance with due process must face the full force of the law.

Mr. F. Zon (Indonesia) said that the question posed had been clearly answered.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Marwan Barghouti while taking note of the concerns expressed and the explanations provided in response.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The Committee had again considered the case of 134 Venezuelan parliamentarians elected in 2015. In light of the findings of the joint mission of the Executive Committee and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to Venezuela in August 2021, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians noted with satisfaction that President Maduro's government had announced the imminent resumption of dialogue with the opposition and reaffirmed in that regard that the issues involved were part of the broader political crisis in Venezuela, which could be resolved only through inclusive political dialogue and by the Venezuelans themselves. The Committee was hopeful that the talks would resume soon and reaffirmed the IPU's readiness to provide support for any effort to strengthen democracy in Venezuela. At the same time, the Committee once again urged the Venezuelan authorities to put an immediate end to all forms of persecution against the opposition parliamentarians elected in 2015.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of 134 Venezuelan parliamentarians.

Mr. S. Cogolati (Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians), said in conclusion that the cases he had presented constituted only a fraction of the record number of cases before the Committee. The IPU had never before been confronted with so many complaints of violations of the human rights of parliamentarians, which often targeted the opposition – including democratic opposition – to a government. The Committee was aware that IPU Members were committed to defending the rights of parliamentarians and that many Members were engaged in concrete actions towards parliamentary solidarity.

In that regard, the parliamentarians currently uniting in defence of democracy in Myanmar and of parliamentarians in detention in Myanmar or in exile from that country were deserving of respect and admiration. He had been particularly touched by the testimonies of some of those parliamentarians who had been able to join by videoconference or in person an event organized in their honour by the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights. He called on all Members to support the fight for democracy and for the freedom and fundamental rights of parliamentarians around the world and expressed the Committee's thanks to the IPU Secretariat, without which it would be unable to pursue its work.

The Chair said that the candidature of Mr. E. Blanc of France had been received to fill one of the two vacancies for membership of the Committee, the second of which would be filled at the 145th Assembly in Kigali. He took it that the Governing Council wished to elect Mr. Blanc as a member of the Committee for a five-year term.

It was so decided.

Item 13 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(CL/209/13-P.1)

(a) Forum of Women Parliamentarians

(CL/209/13(a)-R.1)

Ms. I.Y. Roba Putri (Indonesia), Rapporteur of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report contained in document CL/209/13(a)-R.1 on the 33rd session of the Forum held on 20 March 2022, said that participants had focused in their contributions to the work of the Assembly on gender-based and sexual violence, especially in the contexts of conflict, displacement and migration, and on measures to promote information and communication technology in education and address the related inequalities facing women and girls. In a subsequent panel discussion, they had shared strategies and good practices for strengthening women's and girls' health in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had furthermore decided to work towards a special protocol in support of women parliamentarians who were victims of gender-based violence. The Bureau had engaged in an interactive dialogue on sexual violence in conflict and had also underlined the need for gender balance in the IPU task force to be created on the situation in Ukraine.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

The Chair said that the Governing Council was called upon to endorse the election of Ms. G. Karelova of the Russian Federation to serve until April 2025 as a member of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians in place of Ms. E. Afanasieva, also of the Russian Federation, who had resigned from the position. He took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that election.

It was so decided.

(b) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/209/13(b)-R.1)

Ms. S. Albazar (Egypt), President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, presenting the report contained in document CL/209/13(b)-R.1 on the Forum's meeting held on 21 March 2022, said that participants had begun by sharing updates on youth participation initiatives, such as online training in empowerment and leadership. They had subsequently showcased best examples of action on the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign; highlighted the need for youth inclusion in climate-related decision-making, including at two youth conferences to be hosted by Egypt in the run-up to the UN Conference on Climate Change later in 2022; and contributed to the work of the Assembly in the manner detailed in the report, with a focus on youth engagement in peace processes and on cooperation to share technologies and resources for education. Lastly, the Forum had charged her with preparing a youth overview report as input to a draft resolution relating to international migration, human trafficking and human rights abuses to be tabled for adoption at the 145th Assembly.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia) suggested that the IPU might wish to encourage its Members to follow the example of his Parliament in introducing a programme for instilling a culture of democracy among young people, in particular by engaging them on legislative and other issues of interest or concern to them. The inputs of the secondary school students involved in the programme were an important source of information about what mattered to young people.

Ms. S. Albazar said that others should indeed consider following that inspiring example.

The Secretary General, agreeing with that view and noting that some of the youngest ministers and parliamentarians in the world were Namibian, said that the Parliament of Namibia was to be congratulated on its forward-looking policies and good practices for promoting youth engagement in politics, including through its establishment of youth and children's parliaments. In that same vein, an eminent member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child had recently agreed to engage with the Forum, which was keen to explore ways of rejuvenating national and international processes, on how issues of concern to young people, especially children, could best be taken on board in the IPU's work.

Mr. K. Ait Mik (Morocco) said that, as had been suggested previously, young people would be more engaged if youth advisory bodies were turned instead into decision-making bodies.

The Chair said that the Governing Council was called upon to endorse the election of Mr. M. Alajmi of Kuwait to serve until April 2023 as a member of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians in place of Mr. Al Kattan, also of Kuwait, who was no longer a member of the Board. He took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse that election.

It was so decided.

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/209/13(c)-R.1)

Ms. F. Benbadis (Algeria), member of the Committee on Middle East Questions, in delivering the report contained in document CL/209/13(c)-R.1 on the Committee's sitting of 20 March 2022, said that the Committee had discussed the significance of its mandate of dialogue for peace; been updated on communications received by the IPU on the Middle East situation; and highlighted the importance of its planned visit to the region in June 2022, of working for food self-sufficiency in the Middle East, of developing links with other IPU bodies, and of addressing all crises in the region. The Committee had also been briefed on an upcoming webinar on water technology in the Middle East context and had furthermore emphasized the contribution of science to intercultural dialogue and to tackling regional challenges, including water scarcity, through problem-solving.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

The Chair said that the candidature of Ms. W.T.N. Makwinja of Botswana had been received to fill the vacancy that had remained since the previous session of the Governing Council for a female member of the Committee on Middle East Questions. He took it that the Governing Council wished to elect the candidate to the position.

It was so decided.

(d) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/209/13(d)-R.1)

Mr. J. Kiarie (Kenya), member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, introducing the report contained in document CL/209/13(d)-R.1 on the Committee's meeting of 22 March 2022, said that the Committee had heard a brief update on the situation of refugees from Ukraine, with the figures cited in the report indicating the dramatic pace of displacement. In addition to the measures needed to ensure that international humanitarian law was respected by all parties in the Ukraine conflict, the Committee had highlighted the importance of assistance and protection for refugees, support to host countries, and dialogue for a peaceful resolution. In a constructive exchange with Ms. P. Patten, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), the Committee had identified possible areas of cooperation with her office. Lastly, the Committee had welcomed the planned organization of events in cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and also with the ICRC to mark the 45th anniversary of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions in June 2022.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

(e) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/209/13(e)-R.1)

Ms. H. Ramzy Fayez (Bahrain), on behalf of Ms. L. Vasylenko of Ukraine, member of the Gender Partnership Group, who was absent from the Assembly owing to the ongoing war in her country, said in presenting the report contained in document CL/209/13(e)-R.1 on the Group's 45th session, held on 23 March 2022, that the strong participation of women, comprising 38.6 per cent of delegates, in the Assembly confirmed a positive upward trend. As listed in Annex II to the report, almost one third of delegations were gender balanced, with women accounting for between 40 and 60 per cent of their members. The Group encouraged other delegations to meet that ratio in future to ensure a diversity of views, describing in the report the constructive dialogue it had had with the Nigerian delegation as one of the 13 comprising not a single woman. Having also discussed policy to prevent sexism and sexual harassment at IPU events, the Group had requested the IPU to elaborate a plan for implementation of the UN System Code of Conduct on that subject. It would in due course establish an implementation monitoring mechanism and called on Member Parliaments to develop their own anti-harassment policies, with IPU support.

Ms. H. Hughes (Australia) requested that her delegation be listed as one that was comprised exclusively of women, thereby truly exceeding the 40:60 ratio.

The Chair, speaking in his capacity as Chairperson of the Gender Partnership Group, urged the IPU to work on the proposed code of conduct with a view to its approval at the 145th Assembly.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

(f) Advisory Group on Health
(CL/209/13(f)-R.1)

Ms. G. Katuta (Zambia), Rapporteur of the Advisory Group on Health, in delivering the report contained in document CL/209/13(f)-R.1 on the Group's meeting of 20 March 2022, said that the Group had discussed challenges in ensuring access to health for all in the light of the implementation of the IPU resolution adopted in 2019 on universal health coverage. It had called for greater attention to diseases and other health issues sidelined by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular reference to women, children and adolescents, and for the prioritization of universal health coverage and

strengthened health systems in pandemic preparedness efforts. It had also agreed to continue its accountability role with a more targeted approach to regional challenges to health access and an increased focus on parliamentary capacity-building. Lastly, it had been briefed on the development of a new international instrument for pandemic preparedness, expressing in that context the importance of parliamentary engagement through the IPU and access to relevant data and information on national practices.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

The Chair said that, following on from the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IPU and the WHO had joined forces to develop a new initiative.

The Secretary General, introducing that initiative, said that it consisted of a new tool to assist parliaments in contributing towards efforts to deal with future pandemics, as would be explained in an important message from the Director-General of the WHO.

Dr. T.A. Ghebreyesus (Director-General of the WHO), in a pre-recorded video message, said that the IPU was a long-standing partner of the WHO and instrumental in bringing nations and partners together in solidarity, for which there was no substitute when the world was at risk. As the legal framework governing the global response to pandemics and other health threats, the International Health Regulations (IHR) were rooted in the 19th century when countries had first come together to address shared health threats of devastating impact, including on trade and economies. The IHR had been revised several times, most recently after the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, in 2005, and included obligations to develop and maintain national capacities to prevent, detect and respond to health emergencies.

With parliaments playing a such critical role in translating the IHR into national law and taking efforts forward, the WHO had partnered with the IPU to develop a handbook, *Strengthening health security preparedness: The International Health Regulations (2005)*, to support parliamentary leadership and action for building sustainable capacity in communities for health emergency preparedness. The handbook was important for strengthening multisectoral cooperation to that end through a focus on three key priorities: better IHR implementation; targeted IHR amendments as needed; and a new international treaty on pandemic preparedness already being negotiated by WHO Member States, bearing in mind that COVID-19 would not be the last global health threat

The Secretary General, thanking Dr. Ghebreyesus for his inspiring words and cooperation in bringing the scientific community closer to the decision-making community represented in the IPU, said that the IPU was intent on conveying the message to parliamentarians that they must never again be caught unprepared to cope with a crisis of such magnitude as the COVID-19 pandemic. The new handbook was therefore a practical tool for promoting implementation of the IHR so as to foster global health security, which went hand in hand with the goal of universal health coverage embodied in the IPU resolution on the subject.

The handbook entitled "Strengthening health security preparedness: The International Health Regulations (2005)" was jointly launched by the WHO delegation to the Assembly and the President of the Assembly, Ms. P. Maharani of Indonesia.

(g) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG)
(CL/209/13(g)-R.1)

Ms. J. Oduol (Kenya), Chairperson of the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, in delivering the report contained in document CL/209/13(g)-R.1 on the Group's meeting of 21 March 2022, said that the Group had been informed about the IPU's new mobile application and unique interactive map providing access to all global counter-terrorism legislation. It had reviewed the purposes of the newly launched Model Legislative Provisions for victims of terrorism and the action plan derived from the Call of the Sahel declaration and had also heard briefings, as described in the report, from two guest speakers, Ms. P. Patten, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Mr. D. Cesselin of the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie. Lastly, it had discussed its workplan for the coming year and the budget for the IPU's programme on countering terrorism and violent extremism, thanking the Parliaments of China and the United Arab Emirates for their contributions and encouraging others to donate funds towards the implementation of the workplan.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

(h) Working Group on Science and Technology
(CL/209/13(h)-R.1)

Mr. M. Larive (France), Chairperson of the Working Group on Science and Technology, delivering the report contained in document CL/209/13(h)-R.1 on the Group's two meetings held on 4 February and 20 March 2022, said that the Group had welcomed the inclusion of a reference to science in the new IPU Strategy and would work to implement the related objective through its workplan. As part of that ambitious workplan, for which it would be vital to determine a specific budget, the Group was set to participate in a conference on science, ethics and human development to be held in September 2022 in Viet Nam. The Group had heard an expert briefing on an upcoming webinar on water technology in the context of the Middle East water crisis, a science for peace initiative that it strongly supported as a means of rapprochement in conflict. Lastly, the Group had examined and made suggestions concerning the form and content of the proposed international charter on the ethics of science and technology intended as a starting point for the development of legislation in that sphere.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

Item 14 of the agenda

OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair, referring to the IPU President's proposal for the creation of an IPU anthem as a tool of unity and identity, said that the Executive Committee had welcomed the proposal and tasked the IPU Secretariat with drafting terms of reference on how to proceed. The Governing Council would be kept informed of progress in the matter.

Concerning the new IPU Cremer-Passy Prize, Members were strongly encouraged to submit their nominations before the deadline of 30 April 2022. The winner announced on 30 June 2022, the International Day of Parliamentarianism, would be invited to the 145th Assembly to receive the award.

Following an exchange of courtesies, he declared the session closed.

The sitting rose at 12:50.