



Evaluating parliament: objectives, methods, results and impact

**Geneva, Switzerland
Thursday 22 October 2009**

Background note for participants

June 2009

Parliaments are increasingly attentive to the way in which they carry out their representative, legislative and oversight functions. They are also seeking ways to enhance often dwindling public confidence in parliamentarians and the institution of parliament in general. Periodic and meaningful evaluation can be a powerful tool for ensuring that parliament performs effectively and maintains strong and healthy relations with citizens and the executive branch of government.

There are many possible objectives and methods when carrying out an evaluation. However, all evaluations share a common goal of strengthening parliament as the central institution of democracy and ensuring its continuing relevance in the twenty-first century.

Since its publication in September 2008, the initial reaction to the IPU's *Evaluating parliament: A self-assessment toolkit for parliaments*¹ has been swift and largely positive. The toolkit is intended to help parliaments analyse their performance, which in turn should lead them to identify any weaknesses and formulate recommendations for reform and development. It has been used, for example, by the parliaments of Rwanda and Sierra Leone in the context of the revision or creation of a strategic plan for parliamentary development.

A number of other organizations are involved in the development of methods for evaluating parliamentary performance, including the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Assemblée parlementaire de la francophonie, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank Institute. The Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments is currently working on a toolkit for evaluating the parliamentary administration.

This one-day conference is targeted at parliamentarians, Secretaries General and staff involved in the future directions of parliament. The conference will provide a forum for discussion of different approaches to the evaluation of parliament, sharing of lessons learned and understanding the potential results and impact of evaluation. By the end of the day, it is intended that each participant will be equipped with new tools to make a more effective contribution to the evaluation and development of their parliament.

The conference will be co-organized by the IPU, the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament and other partners. Interpretation will be available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The conference will have an interactive format to maximise exchange and discussion among participants.

¹ *Evaluating parliament: A self-assessment toolkit for parliaments*
<http://www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#self>