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146th IPU Assembly

Manama (11–15 March 2023)

Standing Committee on
United Nations Affairs

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Modalities and methods of work for the Committee

At its 210th session in Kigali in October 2022, the Governing Council considered and endorsed a roadmap for the implementation of the report on the IPU political project at the United Nations. The report recommends, among other things, a review of the mandate and working methods of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs. The Governing Council encouraged the Bureau of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs to contribute to the reflection on the strategies to make the Committee's work more effective.

Consultations took place between the Bureau and the Secretariat in January 2023. This note reflects the outcome of those deliberations and proposes improvements to the modalities and working methods of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs. The Bureau will pursue consideration of these proposals at its meeting during the 146th IPU Assembly in Manama, Bahrain.

The Committee is an important component of the IPU's political project at the UN. It complements the IPU's mission of engaging parliaments in the work of the United Nations at national and global levels, seeking to strengthen the UN as the primary multilateral institution of global governance. The Committee's primary objective is to help ensure the United Nations is more inclusive of parliaments and parliamentarians as key actors in global processes, and to help the United Nations be more effective in responding to a growing set of global challenges.

Mandate

The Committee helps parliamentarians oversee their governments at the UN by understanding better the way the UN works at political and operational levels and engaging parliaments in relevant UN reform processes.

This mandate shall be exercised through five distinct areas of work.

First, the Committee mobilizes parliamentarians around select UN reform issues of greatest impact to global governance, such as: improving the gender balance of the General Assembly, supporting the reform of the Security Council to be more representative of the international community, and making the UN budget more transparent and effective.

Second, the Committee promotes parliamentary oversight of the UN and its system agencies with regard to their substantive subject areas (e.g., climate change, human trafficking, counter-terrorism, education, etc.).

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Third, the Committee promotes parliamentary engagement in key accountability processes of the UN, such as those for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (Voluntary National Reviews), human rights treaties (such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child), the Universal Periodic Review and human rights commitments, and national military expenditures (UN Office of Disarmament Affairs).

Fourth, the Committee promotes stronger relations between UN Country Teams (led by Resident Coordinators) and national parliaments with regard to key government-led processes for development and peace building.

Fifth, the Committee tracks the state of parliamentary ratification and entry into force of select UN treaties, protocols and conventions.

Working methods

The Committee shall pursue its mandate through regular sessions held at IPU Assemblies.

In particular, the Committee shall:

- Hold panel discussions and hearings with UN officials
- Promote parliamentary campaigns around selected UN issues, directing parliamentarians to take certain actions and to report on results as needed
- Conduct site visits to explore how the UN system operates within countries and in relation to national parliaments
- Organize a special meeting on “the role of parliament in multilateralism”, at the level of Speakers or head of delegations, at the mid-point between consecutive World Conferences of Speakers of Parliament

During Assemblies, the Bureau of the Committee can propose motions related to its mandate for discussion by the Committee in plenary. The final amended text is adopted by a majority vote of those present at the Committee session. A motion directed to parliaments or the United Nations, shall include a brief introduction followed by a brief action-oriented operational part (not to exceed 600 words in total). Once adopted, the motion would be presented to the Assembly for its consideration.

Further, the Committee shall complement the work of the other three Standing Committees of the IPU by mobilizing its Bureau and other parliamentarians to raise awareness of UN processes relevant to the substantive resolutions before those Committees and where appropriate, propose amendments.

The Bureau of the Committee shall decide on the select list of UN reform issues to be dealt with on a recurring basis. No more than five issues should be on the Committee’s docket at a time.

Bureau members are expected to attend all Committee sessions as well as relevant UN meetings in New York, Geneva or Vienna, including the annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. The Secretariat shall provide the Bureau with a list of suggested events at least three months in advance.

The Bureau of the Committee shall review the Committee’s mandate and working methods every two years taking into account the Committee’s performance as well as other institutional changes within the IPU committee structure.