



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# Impact Report 2023



# The IPU

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the global organization of national parliaments. It was founded in 1889 as the first multilateral organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations.

Today, the IPU comprises 180 national Member Parliaments and 15 regional parliamentary bodies. It promotes peace, democracy and sustainable development. It helps parliaments become stronger, younger, greener, more gender-balanced and more innovative. It also defends the human rights of parliamentarians through a dedicated committee made up of members of parliament from around the world.

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# 2023 IN FIGURES



**26,500**

media mentions

of the IPU (up 10% compared with 2022)

**16** 

Publications  
for parliamentarians  
in 11 languages



**180**

Member Parliaments

and **15** Associate  
Members

**762** 

human rights  
cases examined by  
the IPU in 2023



**1500**

changemakers

have committed to the IPU's youth campaign  
*I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!*  
including 61 Speakers of Parliament  
and 15 Heads of State

Over

**150,000** views

of the IPU's climate videos as part  
of the *Parliaments for the Planet* campaign



Average proportion  
of women MPs at  
IPU Assemblies

**35.3%** in 2023



Average proportion  
of young MPs at IPU Assemblies  
(under 45 years old)

**26.6%** in 2023



IPU organized

**75** global and regional events for parliaments including

**2** Assemblies + **45** national capacity-building activities

# Foreword



Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General.  
© Parliament of Bahrain

Preparations for a super election year in 2024 have not dampened the sense that democracy in 2023 was on the backfoot. People in the Middle East, Sudan and Ukraine were all too often caught up in the brutal fighting around them, while coups and political instability have continued to undermine the rule of law in the Sahel Region and some countries in Latin America. Weakened by climate change, economic insecurity and growing inequality, many governments are struggling to deliver for their populations. As the legitimacy of those in power is called into question, fertile ground has opened up for the emergence of populist and authoritarian regimes.

Against this background, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) stepped up its efforts to support parliaments by providing a space for dialogue and encouraging them to become stronger, younger, greener and more gender-balanced to better serve the people they represent.

Demonstrating an appetite for more parliamentary multilateralism rather than less, the IPU grew in 2023 with the accession of the parliaments of Liberia and the Bahamas, our 179<sup>th</sup> and 180<sup>th</sup> Members respectively, as well as many observers and partners signing up to join or rejoin our global parliamentary community.

This, together with the multiple events and initiatives that we organized in 2023, in which thousands of parliamentarians and stakeholders from all over the world participated, demonstrates that the IPU is becoming yet more inclusive, in line with our strategy to develop richer parliamentary ecosystems for democracy, for everyone.

This Report is not designed to be exhaustive, nor does it cover all our activities in 2023. Rather it is a snapshot of some of the best examples of the impact we have achieved over the year as well as a selection of our outputs.

Below are some highlights of the year.

## ***Parliaments for the Planet***

Climate action was our main theme of the year, following the request from Members to make it the top priority of the 2022-2026 IPU Strategy.

At the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Bahrain in March, we launched a new climate campaign, [Parliaments for the Planet](#), designed to encourage parliaments to accelerate climate action.

In only a few months, the campaign had mobilized hundreds of trailblazing parliamentarians, who shared their good practices and solutions. Many of those solutions were also highlighted by the record number of parliamentarians attending our meetings at COP28, the UN Climate Change Conference, in Dubai in December.

Also linked to the theme of the year, the Cremer-Passy Prize, named after the IPU's founding fathers, was awarded to [Mr. Samuelu Penitala Teo, Speaker of the Parliament of Tuvalu](#), in recognition of his outstanding record on climate action.

## ***Building bridges***

William Randall Cremer and Frédéric Passy were at the forefront of our minds last year, not only because of their namesake prize, but also because the spirit in which they founded the IPU, to encourage peace-building, has never seemed so relevant.

Member Parliaments adopted two important declarations to underscore the hope for peace: the Manama Declaration on [Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance](#) at the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, and the Luanda Declaration on [Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions](#) at the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Angola in October.

The Luanda Declaration also made reference to an important new piece of work that the IPU has spearheaded, the [Indicators for Democratic Parliaments](#), designed to help parliaments evaluate their democratic credentials with a view to becoming stronger and more inclusive institutions.

And for the first time, we organized a global [Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue](#) to encourage parliaments to be more inclusive of religions, beliefs and faith-based organizations in their work in the interests of peaceful coexistence.

The IPU leadership also visited some of the regions experiencing conflict, notably the [Sahel region](#) and the [Middle East](#), on behalf of the global parliamentary community, in a bid to give the IPU's peace-building role more robustness.

Our efforts in the Middle East have taken on new relevance in view of the protracted conflict in Gaza with its disastrous humanitarian consequences. And the war in Ukraine will remain a priority in our peace-building efforts, particularly through the work of the [IPU Task Force for the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine](#). The IPU is also keen to rekindle efforts to resolve conflicts such as the one between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

### **Gender equality inches forward**

History teaches us that wars are usually fought between men but that women often play an essential role in peace and reconciliation processes.

At the IPU, we have been convinced for a long time that many of the world's problems could be solved through greater gender parity in political leadership.

By the end of the year, we were able to report that close to 27% of parliamentarians in the world were women, a small increase on the year before.

Earlier in the year, our annual report, [Women in Parliament 2022](#), revealed that women's participation in parliament has never been as diverse and representative as it is in many countries today.

However, overall progress towards global gender equality remains painfully slow. Online violence, exacerbated by artificial intelligence, will be an additional hurdle for women involved in political life in 2024. The experience of 2023 brought home the point that we can never be vigilant enough on the terrain of democracy and especially gender equality. There is no room for complacency. The election of a new President, a woman from Africa, shows that there is progress we can build on.

### **More young people in politics**

As well as more women, more young people running for office is another prerequisite to stronger and more inclusive democracies.

The latest IPU report on [Youth Participation in Parliament](#) showed that parliaments are getting slightly younger, with small increases in the number of parliamentarians under 45 years old. However, despite the progress, parliaments are still a long way from representing young people proportionately.

### **Defending MPs in trouble**

A few days before Human Rights Day on 10 December, we released our [annual map of the number of reported cases](#) of human rights violations suffered by parliamentarians around the world.

Although the numbers continue to rise, you will read some success stories in this report, partly due to actions by the [Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians](#), the IPU body which defends MPs in trouble. We can proudly state that our approach involving a mix of discreet engagement, steadfastness and perseverance often pays off.

### **2024 and beyond**

Despite the dangers they sometimes face, candidates from all walks of life will come forward to run in the many parliamentary elections that are taking place in 2024.

As we celebrate the IPU's impact, we need to remain lucid in acknowledging the challenges on its way, including conflicts, political uncertainty, stretched resources and the need for members to be more responsive.

The IPU will continue to address these challenges and mitigate the effects thereof to stay relevant and resilient as it has been throughout its 135 years of existence.

As we reach the mid-point of the IPU's 2022-2026 Strategy, I am confident that the IPU, with the strong support of its members, will continue to empower parliamentarians, both incumbent and new, and the wider parliamentary family, for democracy, for everyone.



Martin Chungong  
Secretary General  
March 2024

# PART 1

## Strategic Objective 1: Building effective and empowered parliaments

For democracy to function effectively, parliaments and parliamentarians must be able to perform their functions fully and effectively, including the development of legislation and budgets, representation of their constituents, and holding the government to account. We build parliamentary capacity for members of parliament (MPs) and their staff, including by protecting their rights to perform their mandate without fear of harassment or violence. We also leverage our rich collection of data, expertise, publications and research to set standards which empower parliaments.

### MP human rights

The IPU's unique [Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians](#) consists of 10 parliamentarians, who are elected by their peers for a mandate of five years. The Committee defends MPs in trouble by raising awareness of their plight and engaging national authorities.

762

cases examined  
by the IPU in 2023.



Senator Leila de Lima from the Philippines was released from prison in 2023 partly thanks to IPU lobbying. © JAM STA ROSA/AFP

The Committee's work in 2023 led directly to the release of nine MPs,<sup>1</sup> although our data also shows that MPs' human rights have never been under so much pressure. Overall, the number of human rights violations against MPs continues to rise, with a total of 762 cases in 2023, up 38% from 550 in 2020. These figures probably represent just the tip of an iceberg of many more cases that go unreported. Most of the violations are State-sponsored, an indication that democracy may be backsliding in some places. More than 80% of the cases involve opposition MPs, and the most common violations relate to freedom of expression.

We have had further success in recent years by enlisting the support of parliaments not currently represented on the Committee, including Germany's Bundestag, which launched a cross-party initiative in July to support MPs around the world and others at risk of human rights violations.

Meanwhile, 32% of respondents to the IPU's annual survey of Members reported having taken specific action following IPU decisions. This rate has increased from 18% in 2020. In Greece and the United Kingdom, IPU decisions are routinely communicated within parliament and to foreign ministries and other relevant officials.

1. Justin Ndoundangoye from Gabon; Ba Myo Thein, Soe Win (aka) Soe Lay, Win Naing and Kyaw Min Hlaing from Myanmar; Leila de Lima from Philippines; Muhammad Ssegirinya and Allan Ssewanyana from Uganda; and Juan Requesens from Venezuela.

*“In 2024, democracy will be put to the test with over half the world’s population going to the polls. Despite the dangers they sometimes face, I remain confident that parliamentary candidates from all walks of life will run in the elections, determined to improve the lives of the people they represent”*

*Tulia Ackson, IPU President*

### More on MP human rights

- In August, the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians travelled to Iraq, pleading for the swift release of Mr. Ahmed Al-Alwani, an opposition MP who had been arbitrarily arrested in 2013 and tortured while in prison. See **Part 2**, Chapter 3 for more details.
- The IPU Committee also conducted six trial observation missions in Pakistan, Uganda and Zimbabwe to follow up on abuses against MPs in those countries.
- Over the year some 60 IPU decisions were adopted, communicated to national authorities and shared with the international community.
- The IPU Committee held 20 hearings with authorities, victims, experts and other sources.
- In October, the IPU and UN Human Rights Office launched a toolkit to help parliaments better integrate human rights into their work.

### Building strong parliaments

After four years of work, we published a new tool in November – the [Indicators for Democratic Parliaments](#) – together with partner organizations, which offers a framework of 25 indicators so that parliaments can evaluate their strengths and weaknesses against established benchmarks. To date, Albania, Ethiopia and Pakistan have used the indicators, tying this in with other self-assessment work. See **Part 2**, Chapter 2 to read how Pakistan is using the indicators.



## Indicators for Democratic Parliaments

The indicators help to link the IPU in with UN processes, aligning directly with SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7 on effective, accountable and transparent institutions, as well as responsible, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. For the first time, the democratic credentials of a parliament can be measured, linked to SDG16.

Overall in 2023, the IPU organized 75 global and regional events and 45 national activities in 12 countries to support key parliamentary functions as well as more specific thematic areas such as promoting gender-sensitive parliaments and implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs).



Tulia Ackson was elected 31<sup>st</sup> President of the IPU in October. © IPU/Parliament of Angola

### More IPU impact

#### Record number of MPs take part in the UN’s review of human rights

Some 48 parliamentarians took part in the universal periodic review (UPR), the United Nations mechanism for countries to report on human rights. This number is a welcome record for the IPU and its partners, who have been working for several years to involve parliaments more in important UN processes.

MPs from all over the world attend IPU capacity-building workshops and briefings, where they can share good practices and discuss the importance of taking part in the reporting and follow-up cycle of UN human rights bodies.

Morocco’s parliament, for example, participated in UN human rights processes in multiple ways. First, MPs participated in the preparation of their country’s national report, when it was presented to Parliament. Then, in discussions at the UN Human Rights Council and UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the MPs outlined their role in encouraging ratification of multiple UN human rights treaties, as well as the adoption of a law to strengthen the National Human Rights Council and amendments to laws to foster a more independent judiciary. In total, some 15 parliamentarians representing different constituencies in both chambers were able to take part in State delegations to two UN human rights bodies in 2023.

Finally, the IPU has been expanding its work on public engagement, enabling citizens to connect with – and participate in – the process of law-making, as well as formulating policies and holding their governments to account.

Since the third Global Parliamentary Report, on public engagement in the work of parliament, published in 2022 in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than 800 people have attended 10 public engagement webinars, organized by the IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliament.

### More on building strong parliaments

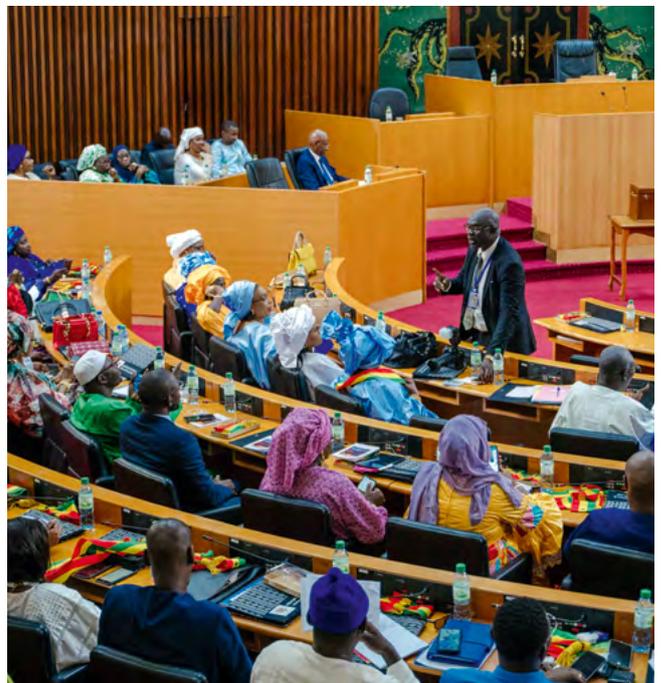
- In Albania, the IPU, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and UNDP worked with MPs, looking at budget scrutiny and finance for achieving the SDGs. The IPU presented its SDG self-assessment toolkit, published in 2016 with UNDP, to the Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development in the Albanian Parliament, which plans to use it shortly.
- Following Djibouti's legislative elections in February, the IPU helped with the induction of new MPs. A welcome kit was distributed in March, and an orientation training session was held in May.
- In Zambia, the IPU's support for the National Assembly's research fair led more MPs to request research support. The research department has since expanded and is serving MPs even better.
- The IPU organized gender mainstreaming workshops in Djibouti, Indonesia, Namibia and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- The IPU enabled an online discussion about economic policy and the SDGs, involving MPs from Albania, Armenia and Finland.

## Strategic Objective 2: Promoting inclusive and representative parliaments

Representation and inclusion are critical success factors for strong parliaments, building parliamentary capacity to understand and represent constituents, as well as legitimacy. The IPU has been promoting inclusive and representative parliaments by encouraging gender equality and youth participation for decades. The IPU's data and knowledge on women and youth in parliament are the authoritative sources for influential media outlets, the UN and academia. We monitor developments and emerging trends, identify good practices and solutions, publish the latest research, and facilitate knowledge-sharing among parliaments when it comes to promoting women and young people in parliament.

### Gender equality

Global progress on gender equality slowed in 2023, and in some cases went into reverse, with reactionary agendas in some countries reducing the rights of women. Violence, lack of educational opportunities and income inequality already affect women and girls disproportionately. Climate change also hits them hard. In September, a UN review found that progress on SDG 5 – gender equality – is way off track. Just two out of its five indicators are “close to target” and none of the SDG5 targets have been “met or almost met.”<sup>2</sup>



In December 2022, two Senegalese MPs were handed six-month jail terms for physically attacking a pregnant MP on the floor of the National Assembly. The IPU condemned the attack and the Senegal parliament has since taken action to become a safer space.

© Carmen Abd Ali/AFP

2. UN, “[The world is failing girls and women, according to new UN report](#)” – 7 September 2023

Linked to the work of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians we also worked with MPs to address violence against women in politics, a growing issue, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that online abuse, exacerbated by artificial intelligence (AI), has become so extensive that some women are either leaving or deciding to stay away from public life.

There are some bright spots, however. For the first time in history, every functioning parliament in the world in 2023 had at least one woman member. Our research also showed that, although some regions lag far behind, the number of women in political leadership has grown.

Following the publication of the 2021 IPU study on [Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa](#), the IPU organized an online discussion on gender-based violence in African parliaments, attended by 100 people, including 50 parliamentarians, from 25 African countries. Some 12 African parliaments and four inter-parliamentary organizations have since reported that they adapted their internal processes to boost gender equality.

Also on the positive side, the parliaments of Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Mongolia and a dozen African countries all used the IPU's gender self-assessment toolkit and other support to advance gender equality in their countries. See [Part 2](#), Chapter 4 for more details on how the Icelandic Parliament is becoming more gender-sensitive.

### More on gender equality

- The IPU shared more data on women in parliament, informing the UN's work on SDG targets 5.5.1a and 16.7.1. This data was frequently cited by the World Economic Forum and other global bodies.
- In March, the IPU published its annual Women in Parliament report, analysing global and regional data.
- Also in March, the IPU and UN Women published their Women in Politics map, showing that women account for a growing number of political leaders, but also that some regions lag far behind.
- In Namibia, a July workshop aimed to build capacity among women MPs for public speaking, lobbying and advocacy. Some 30 women MPs and parliamentary staff attended.
- Women account for just 10% of Japan's MPs, but – using the IPU self-assessment toolkit on gender sensitivity – the Parliament amended legislation to strengthen gender equality.
- Working with the IPU's research findings and recommendations, the Irish Parliament is looking at new measures to address abuse and harassment in political life.
- A group of Kenyan MPs continued to review the Parliament's workplace policy, ensuring that it adequately addresses sexual harassment, protecting women MPs.
- With support from the IPU and the national women's institute, Benin's Parliament set up focal points on sexism and gender-based violence, as well as a mechanism for complaints and sanctions.
- The IPU Gender Partnership Group re-engaged with the Parliament of Nigeria following the 2023 elections, which resulted in a persistently low level of representation of women.
- Using electoral quotas and stakeholder engagement, as well as IPU support, parliaments in Benin and Sierra Leone reached new milestones for women's participation.
- Sierra Leone's women MPs mobilized enough support to raise the electoral quota for women MPs to 30%, doubling the numbers elected in June.
- In Indonesia, 20 participants in an IPU workshop in October, including 10 MPs, said they subsequently felt more confident about promoting gender equality.

### More IPU impact

#### Mongolia reforms its Constitution to increase gender quotas

A new law in Mongolia requires that women account for at least 30% of candidates in the 2024 parliamentary elections, up from 20% at the start of the year. This quota will increase to 40% in 2028.

Electoral quotas are a key recommendation from the IPU, which has been working with Mongolia's Parliament on gender equality and human rights since 2022. The electoral reforms were made while the IPU and Mongolian Parliament were preparing for a gender and human rights self-assessment, which will provide further insights into implementation of the quota and other measures to improve gender equality. Financial incentives will also encourage political parties to support more women candidates.

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African Parliaments adapted their processes to boost gender equality

## Youth participation

When parliaments are representative, they are better able to understand and express the will of the people. This is why the IPU has been working for over 10 years to rejuvenate parliaments. Some 50% of the global population is younger than 30, but just 2.86% of the world's MPs are in this age group, according to the latest IPU data.

In 2023, the IPU continued to push for parliaments to become younger, notably through our [I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!](#) campaign, in which MPs are invited to sign up for one or all of six pledges, from promoting youth quotas to advocating for youth participation.

By the end of the year, some 1,500 changemakers had committed to the campaign, including 719 MPs from more than 167 countries, 61 parliamentary speakers and 15 heads of State and organizations.

In Latin America, the campaign flourished particularly. In June, Mexico amended its Constitution to lower the age of eligibility for parliament from 21 years to 18. MPs who championed the change said they had been inspired by the campaign, which was also launched and promoted at key events in Chile and Uruguay.

Gabon, Mexico and Zimbabwe also changed their constitutions with a view to involving more young people in their parliaments, including by lowering the age to run for President, aligning MP eligibility ages with the voting age, and increasing the quota of parliamentary seats for youth. See [Part 2](#), Chapter 5 for more information about Mexico.



Dan Carden, President of the IPU Board of Young Parliamentarians at the Ninth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Viet Nam. © Parliament of Viet Nam

*“There are many social barriers facing young people running for public office, including prejudice and a lack of financial resources. There are also structural barriers, including age requirements to stand for office in some countries. To strengthen and energize our democracies, we must increase the numbers of young people in our national parliaments so they are fit to face the challenges of the future.”*

*Dan Carden, President of the IPU Board of Young MPs.*

### More on youth participation

- The IPU continued to research youth participation in parliament, becoming the official custodian for data on SDG 16.7. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation and multiple global media outlets also used this data.
- The Parliament of Zimbabwe created a youth caucus and enhanced its youth quota, while its southern neighbour, South Africa, is also establishing a youth caucus.
- Burkina Faso's Transitional Legislative Assembly took steps to enlarge the country's electoral quota for youth.
- Inspired by the campaign, the parliaments of Bahrain, Nigeria and Guyana organized training programmes for young people and MPs.
- In October, we published our biennial Youth participation in national parliaments report showing that parliaments are getting younger but are still a long way from adequately representing youth.
- In June, an IPU online event – Shout Out to Youth Changemakers! – took stock of progress, shared success stories, and urged more action to rejuvenate the world's parliaments.
- In September, nearly 300 young MPs from 70 countries met in Vietnam at the Ninth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians to discuss the role of youth in achieving the SDGs.
- The IPU provided technical support to Zambia's Youth Parliamentary Caucus, helping it to develop its strategic plan, which it had adopted in January 2023.
- The IPU organized four online discussions for young MPs with other MPs, experts and civil society leaders on issues from climate negotiations to human rights.
- In September, youth groups and MPs in Viet Nam shared good practices and experiences at an IPU seminar entitled Strengthening digital capacity for youth.
- The IPU marked International Youth Day by launching a social media campaign, sharing data on youth participation, and promoting its I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament! campaign.
- The IPU also facilitated the participation of young MPs in a range of other global events, organized by the International Renewable Energy Agency, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Kofi Annan Foundation.

# Strategic Objective 3:

## Supporting resilient and innovative parliaments

To deliver for the people, parliaments and parliamentarians must have the capacity to adapt and remain agile. This requires them to seize the opportunities of improving technologies, as well as to manage risks such as unregulated AI and climate change. The IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliament helps parliaments to harness new technologies and ways of working, as well as to share best practices among themselves. We also leverage our research, data and knowledge-sharing with the aim of strengthening parliaments' ability to absorb, evolve and innovate in the face of external shocks, such as climate change.

### Digitalization

Science and technology are quickly opening up new opportunities for parliaments to function more effectively. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, online and digital technologies prevented total shutdowns of parliament at a time when human contact and therefore in-person parliamentary business was severely restricted. Parliaments continued to function by using online and digital technologies.

In 2023, we supported parliaments in their efforts to continue to digitalize through workshops and by publishing a guide to digital transformation, offering a blueprint for parliaments to scale up their use of tools such as AI and cloud computing.

#### More on digitalization

- The IPU ran five webinars on parliamentary data and IT governance and published three issues of the IPU Innovation Tracker.
- At the 146th IPU Assembly in Manama, Bahrain, Member Parliaments adopted a resolution on *Cybercrimes: The new risks to global security*.



Gavin McCormick from Climate TRACE presents the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions at the IPU Parliamentary Meeting at COP28 in Dubai. © Federal National Council

### Climate change

Digital transformation also helps parliaments to decarbonize, reducing their carbon footprints. We launched our 2023 climate campaign, [Parliaments for the Planet](#), designed to encourage parliaments to share their good practices when it comes to greening both parliament and planet.

To help them, we published a guide to decarbonizing parliaments containing 10 recommendations to reduce the environmental impact of parliaments and those who work in them. Besides the increased use of online meetings, for example, we also advocated measures to become paperless, transition away from fossil fuel powered vehicles, and manage waste more effectively. See below for more information on the campaign.

**150,000**

views of the IPU's climate videos

There is no room for complacency, however. The year 2023 was the hottest on record, with reports that the 1.5°C threshold is more and more frequently being breached. The IPU has been enabling parliaments to go further and faster in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, supporting them to develop legislation, pass budgets and hold their governments to account.

Among the respondents to our annual survey of Members, some 50% of parliaments reported that they had taken climate-related actions as a direct result of IPU initiatives and resolutions on climate in 2019 and 2022.

Meanwhile, for the first time ever, the IPU found itself “inside the tent” at the COP28 climate negotiations in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Rather than hosting a side event as at previous COP conferences, we were able to ensure that parliaments were more central to the COP negotiation process through parliamentary meetings hosted in partnership with the UAE in the central COP zones.

In Dubai, top climate experts shared insights on adaptation, sustainable financing and the Loss and Damage Mechanism, as well as enhancing parliamentary oversight of the Paris Agreement. The Meeting outcome document urged parliaments to be more ambitious with Nationally Determined Contributions, promote international cooperation and provide more finance, especially for developing countries including Small Island Developing States. With 400 participants from 70 countries, these were the most well-attended parliamentary meetings in COP history.



Samuel Teo, former Speaker of the Tuvalu Parliament, was awarded the 2023 Cremer-Passy Prize for his exceptional record on climate action. © IPU/Parliament of Angola

*“Parliaments for the Planet will enable us to reinvent the role of legislative bodies in order to generate a coordinated and concerted response on issues such as global warming, climate justice, desertification, e-waste, and environmental degradation. Addressing these challenges calls for greater coordinated political action by parliaments of democratic countries.”*

*Om Birla, the Speaker of the lower house of the Indian Parliament.*

## More IPU Impact

### Greening parliaments and planet

Launched in March 2023, the IPU’s climate campaign *Parliaments for the Planet* encourages parliaments to lead by example by reducing their own carbon footprint and taking concrete measures to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement and limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Dozens of case studies and MP video testimonials produced by the IPU have been watched by close to 150,000 people around the world. The examples provide a snapshot of how climate change is affecting every country in the world and what parliaments can do about it, by highlighting the best initiatives. The IPU guide to greening parliaments, as well as the campaign toolkit, was downloaded hundreds of times.

The campaign was picked up by parliamentary leadership around the world, with many Speakers of Parliament expressing their support either through video testimonial or opinion pieces in national newspapers. The Parliament of Japan translated the guide *10 actions for greener parliaments (and those who work in them)* into Japanese. The Parliaments of Angola and Thailand also produced their own versions of the campaign.

For great examples of climate legislation and policymaking, the IPU continues to contribute to and promote the database [Climate Change Laws of the World](#), with over 5000 examples of laws compiled by the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment of the London School of Economics in the United Kingdom.

See also **Part 2**, Chapter 1 for more details on how the IPU contributed to Benin’s new law on waste management.



Visuals from the IPU's climate campaign *Parliaments for the Planet*

### More on climate change

The IPU organized numerous events for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in the lead-up to COP28 including:

- A panel on climate oversight action at the 146th IPU Assembly, focusing on how parliaments and supreme audit institutions can work together better to oversee national expenditure on climate policy and projects.
- A webinar in May on the latest scientific findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in partnership with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- In August 2023, a regional seminar on climate action and sustainable development for parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean in San José, Costa Rica, in collaboration with the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica.
- In October, the IPU and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments organized an online discussion on greening parliaments, attended by more than 60 parliamentary staff.
- Two intersectoral webinars in November looking first at the nexus between climate and health and then climate and peace and security.
- Following the publication of an IPU Issues Brief with the Adaptation at Altitude Programme, a seminar for parliamentarians looked at how climate change affects mountains and those who depend on them.

## AI

AI was another top theme for us in 2023, since the rapid evolution of the technology has prompted many experts to warn about its potential impacts on democracy. At the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Angola, the IPU's Working Group on Science and Technology pursued work on a future international charter on the ethics of science and technology, that would provide parliaments with a set of principles and values to guide their work in this area.

More immediately, the IPU's [Centre for Innovation in Parliament](#) worked with Brazil to unlock the power of AI, processing the data from massive amounts of documents to understand better how to serve Brazilian citizens. The Centre has multiple workstreams to help parliaments harness new technology, becoming stronger and more effective in the process.

In the same vein, the IPU has also been looking at other ways to connect parliaments with the latest science and technology. It has been working with parliaments around the

world, including in Malaysia, Romania and Slovenia, helping them to engage with academics on a range of topics such as air quality and energy security. The IPU took part in Geneva's Science Diplomacy Week in May, which looked at ways to harness the soft power of science as encouragement for countries to collaborate.

Finally, we enhanced our work on looking to the future. MPs rightly represent their current constituents, but they are also accountable to future generations. With this in mind, together with Uruguay's parliament, we welcomed MPs from all over the world to the Second World Summit of the Committees of the Future in September.

The Summit looked at the democracy of the future, and the relationship between AI and parliaments, and its outcomes will inform discussions at the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024.

# 1 Strategic Objective 4:

## Catalysing collective parliamentary action

By the end of 2023, trust within the global community was at a low point, with the fighting in Ukraine and Gaza polarizing opinion around the world. Without some level of trust and collaboration, it will be hard to find lasting solutions on climate change, trade and future pandemic prevention, as well as peace and security and a range of other global challenges.

As an organization dedicated to political dialogue, it can sometimes be hard to demonstrate results. But the act of talking is a vital part of building trust, and we have been committed to bringing parliamentarians around the table since our foundation in 1889. The IPU offers a complementary – and often more informal and discreet – channel of communication for countries to engage in dialogue, especially those in conflict.

### Parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy

Whatever the global context, however, the world's parliaments continue to demonstrate their commitment to multilateralism through sustained and active membership of the IPU. In 2023, Liberia rejoined the global parliamentary family and the Bahamas joined, bringing the number of Member Parliaments to 180 and the IPU even closer to universality. Like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, the IPU provides a vital opportunity for politicians from around the world to talk. That is why almost every parliament in the world is a Member.



MPs Hala Ramzy Fayeze (Bahrain) and Melvin Bouva (Suriname) presenting the Manama Declaration at the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Bahrain. © Parliament of Bahrain



Carolina Cerqueira, the Speaker of the Parliament of Angola, host of the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly. © Parliament of Angola

Our two IPU Assemblies in 2023, in Bahrain and Angola, provided ample opportunity for parliamentarians from all over the world to meet and talk including those from countries currently at war.

As well as providing a space in which to engage parliamentarians from the Russian Federation and Ukraine (see Impact Box below), the IPU maintains open channels of communication between the two Koreas, both sides of the Green Line in Cyprus, and also between Israel and Palestine.

## More IPU impact

### IPU Task Force supports children, victims of the war, in Ukraine

More than two years after the start of the war in Ukraine and with no mutually agreeable peace settlement in sight, the IPU Task Force for the [peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine](#) is one of the few remaining forums in which Russian and Ukrainian politicians can continue to engage.

Since it was established in March 2022, the IPU Task Force has held multiple meetings, visited key sites in the Russian Federation and Ukraine in July 2022, and conducted in-person consultations with parliamentary delegations from both countries every six months in the context of IPU Assemblies.

Both sides have agreed in principle to focus on the four common issues from the various peace plans: nuclear safety, food security, access to and treatment of prisoners of war, and ecologically vulnerable sites. More recently, the Task Force has also decided to move forward on the issue of the thousands of Ukrainian children affected by the war. The Task Force has received information from both sides and is currently engaging with another IPU body, the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, to map out concrete steps to address the humanitarian consequences of the war.

In November, IPU President Tulia Ackson travelled to Israel and the West Bank, her first official trip since her election to the role in October. At the time of writing, with peace elusive in the region, the IPU's Committee on Middle East Questions is actively trying to create a space for dialogue between parliamentarians from the region, including representatives from Israel and Palestine.



Tulia Ackson, IPU President, visited Israel and the West Bank on her first official trip. © IPU

Away from the Assemblies, IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong was also busy with direct peacebuilding efforts in [Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali](#), meeting the authorities and MPs to listen to their vision for the future and offer support for a transition back to democracy. Many citizens in the region are struggling with poverty, made worse by terrorism and the growing impacts of climate change, illiteracy and unemployment.



IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong visiting a community of displaced people in Burkina Faso © IPU

There was a special focus on the Sahel at the IPU's 147<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Angola, including, on 25 October, during the Second Global Parliamentary Summit on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism. At the Summit, parliamentarians discussed how to build pathways to peace and a better future for the victims of terrorism.

Earlier in the year, the IPU and the Algerian Parliament organized a regional seminar for hundreds of parliamentarians on engaging communities in the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism.

Against this background, we stepped up our work to bring parliamentarians into discussions on peace and security, climate change and disarmament. By the end of the year, we had also facilitated signature and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by Somalia, the Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, increasing the reach of this vital Treaty.

### More on parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy

- In June, the IPU and the Moroccan Parliament organized a Conference (the first of such a meeting at the global level) on Interfaith Dialogue, convening parliamentarians, representatives of religions and beliefs, civil society leaders, and other experts. See [Part 2](#), Chapter 6 for more information on the IPU's interfaith work.
- The IPU further developed its network of like-minded organizations to promote new paradigms on peace and human/common security.
- At the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Luanda, a panel discussed the inventory of tools available for MPs to engage in dialogue, legislation and oversight in the pursuit of peace.
- Also in Luanda, an expert hearing examined the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and AI.
- In October, the IPU and the Indian Parliament convened parliamentary leaders from the world's 20 major economies for the so-called P20 Summit, to provide a parliamentary dimension in follow-up to the G20 Summit in September.
- Throughout the year, the IPU organized many webinars on peace and security including one in November based on the publication for parliamentarians [Assuring our common future](#). Over 100 MPs and experts discussed the relationship between peace, climate change and disarmament.
- In September, we brought parliamentarians to Quy Nhon, Viet Nam, for a Science for Peace Parliamentary Meeting with the objective of bringing science closer to legislators tasked with solving regional and transboundary issues, such as water or energy.
- In November, the IPU participated in Geneva Peace Week, including its digital video series, and discussed the importance of common security in the context of growing international tensions.
- In December, the IPU jointly organized a seminar with the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons on parliamentary action to address illicit arms.

## Engaging with the UN

In 2023, the importance of involving parliamentarians in international relations has never seemed so relevant. At the opening of the 78<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly the IPU organized its first meeting for MPs on the sidelines of that important high-level week in New York. Also, some 48% of respondents to the IPU annual survey of Members have carried out joint activities with UN Country Teams and/or UN agencies, up from 34% in 2021.

As well as the record number of MPs participating in the Universal Periodic Review process mentioned on page nine, the IPU intensified its engagement with another UN mechanism – the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This included outreach to parliamentary leaders and two dedicated webinars in April and December. Six countries included MPs in their CEDAW delegations. At least eight of 12 parliaments surveyed said they were now engaged with CEDAW, drafting national reports, talking with the Committee, and following up on concluding observations.

At the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) are another area of IPU's engagement with the UN and its processes. We have engaged parliaments in multiple ways on this issue, including holding a meeting for parliamentarians from around the world on the sidelines of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York, and the [Fifth Interregional Seminar on the Achievement of the SDGs](#) jointly organized by the IPU and the National People's Congress of China.



Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.  
© IPU

*"I am particularly pleased at the close and efficient collaboration between our Offices in organizing this event, the rich and interesting presentations and discussions, and the endorsement of the pledges document by participating parliamentarians."*

*Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights following the seminar organized in June at the IPU on women's rights.*

### More on engaging with the UN

- The focus was on water at the Annual Parliamentary Hearing, a joint IPU and UN General Assembly initiative, attended by 250 parliamentarians and staff from more than 60 countries.
- Regional seminars on the role of parliament in accelerating the SDGs took place for parliaments in the Eastern Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions throughout the year.
- In February, the IPU continued its work to mobilize parliaments in support of children's rights by co-organizing a workshop with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- The IPU organized side events at the 146<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Bahrain on universal health coverage and comprehensive sexuality education.
- In March, the IPU and UN Women welcomed 75 parliamentarians to their annual meeting at the UN's Commission on the Status of Women. Discussions focused on women's leadership in technological innovation, combating technology-facilitated violence, and enhancing parliaments' use of technology for gender equality.
- In April, a delegation from the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians took part in the United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum and its side events in New York.
- In June, as part of the year-long initiative to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the IPU and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights organized a joint parliamentary roundtable on women's rights and launched a new version of the CEDAW handbook for parliamentarians.
- The IPU also worked with the CEDAW Committee on decision-making equality, including by initiating public discussion in February and engaging diplomats, MPs and civil society.
- The parliaments of Bahrain, Bhutan, Costa Rica, Germany, Nicaragua, Slovenia, Philippines and Uruguay actively engaged in processes such as drafting national reports, debates, dialogues with the CEDAW Committee and follow-up to concluding observations.

# 1 Strategic Objective 5:

## Strengthening the IPU's accountability

Transparency, accountability and good governance are vital features of parliamentary democracies. They are also critical success factors to ensure that the IPU achieves its strategic objectives. The IPU nurtures a culture of mutual accountability at all levels – among Member Parliaments, between Member Parliaments and the IPU, and within the IPU Secretariat, including its offices in Geneva, New York and Vienna. The IPU's Working Group on Transparency, Accountability and Openness oversees all measures to make the Organization more transparent. IPU communications are also a key driver of the success of the IPU overall strategy.

The current process for following up on IPU outcomes is based on several pillars: an annual reporting exercise, a special accountability segment at Assemblies, follow-up work by the IPU's Standing Committees and other bodies, the IPU's programmatic work at both a global and national level, and IPU communications giving visibility to good parliamentary practice on its digital and social media platforms.

Of the 45 parliaments scheduled to participate in the reporting exercise in 2023, some 32 responded, representing a rate of 71%, a considerable improvement on the 22% response rate in 2022. Some 40% of respondents said that IPU Assemblies had influenced their national legislation and/or other decisions, up from 37% in 2022 and 28% in 2021.

### Follow-up to IPU initiatives

The IPU places high value on dialogue, but we also encourage Member Parliaments to follow up on declarations, resolutions and other IPU initiatives to support democracy, peace and sustainable development. And in this respect, our Member Parliaments have been active.

**26,500**

media mentions  
of the IPU



The IPU communications team interview dozens of MPs every year. Here interviewing Mauritius MP Patrick Assirvaden.  
© Parliament of Bahrain

## IPU governance

As governance is also about behaviours, in 2023 the IPU put in place [new policies](#), including a *Code of Conduct for IPU Governance Officials*, as well as a *Policy to prevent and address harassment, including sexual harassment, at IPU Assemblies and other IPU events*. The IPU also initiated work on the first draft of a sustainability policy for its events and operations.

*“This is an important moment for Uruguay and for the IPU. For the first time, there will be a regional office, in the Latin American and Caribbean region. My country has been on a long journey to defend democracy, human rights and the rule of law to become the full democracy that we are proud of today. This gives us a strong foundation for the future IPU office through which parliamentarians will be able to meet to strengthen democracies and parliaments - not only in the region but beyond.”*

*Beatriz Argimón, President of the General Assembly and the Senate, and Vice-President of Uruguay, Member of the IPU Executive Committee.*

In June, the IPU signed an agreement with the Government of Uruguay on the establishment of the IPU’s first regional office in Montevideo. The future office will deepen the IPU’s engagement with parliaments in the Latin America and the Caribbean region by encouraging inter-parliamentary cooperation and helping the IPU to implement its global strategy.



Beatrice Argimón, President of the General Assembly and the Senate of Uruguay © Parliament of Portugal

## Communications and digital transformation

By the end of the second year of the 2022-2026 Communications Strategy, most indicators were healthy, showing the increasing visibility, relevance and influence of the IPU.

The main objective of the Communications Strategy is to enhance the IPU’s position as the global resource for, about and between parliaments, targeted primarily at the 46,000 MPs around the world as well as the overall ecosystem in which they operate, including the executive branch, diplomatic corps, civil society, media and academia.

In 2023, we stepped up the communication services that we offer to Member Parliaments by showcasing more good parliamentary practice, interviewing dozens of MPs, offering video-on-demand and livestreaming at big events, supporting IPU office-holders and leadership on social media, and reviewing the model for communication between the Secretariat and Member Parliaments.

We continue to invest heavily in our digital communications by keeping our multiple digital and social media platforms up to date with the latest trends, and populating them with case studies, stories about MPs and positive, engaging, solutions-focused content about parliaments.

We have also adapted the Communications Strategy to go where our target audiences are by concentrating more on Meta’s platforms (Facebook and Instagram) and LinkedIn. Despite the ongoing turmoil at X (formerly Twitter) we had notable successes for the IPU’s climate campaign on and around 30 June, International Day of Parliamentarism, which led to 2.7 million impressions (the number of times that an IPU post appears on a user’s feed) over a seven-day period.

2023 also saw an uptick in our media coverage, from 23,900 mentions in 2022 to 26,500 in 2023, including top-tier coverage in the New York Times, the Guardian, Le Temps, Politico, El Universal and the Hindustan Times.

Investments in our MP database are also starting to pay off, with some 24,000 contacts harvested by the end of 2023, including all participants in IPU events and new members of parliamentary chambers following elections.

## PART 2

# In focus



### POLICY GOAL 1 – CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change kills people, destroys lives, and disrupts society, environment and security all around the world. That is why climate action is the IPU's number one priority in the 2022-2026 strategic period. We work with UN partners such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to help parliaments progress with implementation of the Paris Agreement and other climate agreements. We also support the acceleration of climate adaptation and efforts to build resilience to climate change and other environmental issues.

### Supporting Benin to protect its environment

When Benin requested support with the management of its chemicals and related waste, the IPU connected the west African Parliament with experts at the United Nations and organized a training course for parliamentarians.

Less than a year later, the National Assembly passed Law 2022-36 on the management of chemical products and their waste, helping to protect the health of Benin's 13 million people as well as the wider region.

From fertilizers to the pesticides sprayed on cotton crops, chemicals are widely used in Benin but they are often applied with little knowledge or understanding of the risks. In one harvest season, pesticides poisoned 147 people, including 10 who lost their lives.



Baobab tree in a sandstorm in Benin. © Kaksonen/ Biosphoto via AFP

Benin's approach has included ratification of international agreements – such as the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions – and as part of these commitments, it wanted to introduce the appropriate laws and regulations.

As a result, Benin's National Assembly immediately took notice when the IPU and UNEP issued [a joint policy note](#) in 2021 to urge a green recovery from COVID-19. The note outlined five areas of action, including chemicals and waste management, and invited parliaments to get in touch if they ever wanted technical assistance. In 2022, Benin's National Assembly reached out.

By September 2022, the IPU, UNEP and Benin's National Assembly had designed and organized a one-day workshop for 50 MPs in Cotonou, Benin's largest city. A UNEP expert delivered the workshop in person, while other experts attended virtually. An expert from Burkina Faso shared his insights and experiences too.



## POLICY GOAL 2 – DEMOCRACY AND STRONG PARLIAMENTS

The IPU believes that democracy is the most effective form of governance and the best way to translate a population's needs, via a legislative/parliamentary framework into reality. Strong parliaments are therefore not just the cornerstones of democracy, they are also essential for development. They represent the people, pass laws, adopt budgets and hold governments to account. As the global organization of parliaments, the IPU helps parliaments to become more effective, accountable, transparent, responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative.

### Pakistan self-tests the democratic credentials of its upper house

Democracy is not an easy concept to measure, but when the IPU and partners produced the [Indicators for Democratic Parliaments](#), several parliaments tested out this self-assessment toolkit, including Pakistan's upper house, the Senate.

Since independence in 1947, Pakistan's democratic credentials have often been under pressure. Despite multiple efforts to establish democratic systems, the consolidation of democratic norms and practices has been a challenge. By assessing its own strengths and weaknesses, the Pakistani Senate generated 14 recommendations for itself to become more effective.

The workshop reviewed the state of chemicals and waste management in Africa, as well as the main challenges and issues associated with the subject. It also provided an overview of the main international chemical and waste management processes as well as the appropriate national measures.

Less than a year later, the 109 members of the National Assembly had developed and voted for the comprehensive new law, whose 78 articles align closely with the workshop content. The law sets out the obligations of the State, professionals and civil society, as well as the rules for production, marketing, registration, import and export, packaging, labelling, advertising, disposal and recovery, tracking and traceability, and more.

This successful outcome shows how the IPU can connect parliaments to global expertise, enabling them to perform their functions more effectively, including on top priority environmental issues.

Development of the self-assessment toolkit began in 2019, with the IPU partnering with a host of parliamentary organisations and other important stakeholders. Participating in a focus group to discuss an early version, a staff member of the Parliament of Pakistan saw the potential for his country and proposed a self-assessment. The idea rapidly gained political support in the Senate.

The self-assessment is based on 25 Indicators, each one with several criteria. The indicators are grouped into seven targets, matching the language used in targets 16.6 and 16.7 of the UN's sustainable development goals.

The Senate put together a steering committee of three senators, who worked closely with the Senate's Secretary General and with support from the Senate secretariat, including its parliamentary digital development unit (PDU).

With limited time and competing priorities, setting aside time to complete the work was a struggle for senators and parliamentary staff. Meanwhile, the requirement to find evidence for almost 500 criteria made the task even more complex and challenging.

But three months after the initial decision to self-test, the process was complete. Comments and feedback had been incorporated into a single document – including the evidence, grades and recommendations for change – and submitted to the Senate Chairman for approval.



Parliament House, Islamabad, Pakistan. © Muhammad Reza/Anadolu via AFP

Some Senators said that the true significance of the assessment had revealed itself throughout the process, which included a thorough review of administrative capacities, accessibility standards and the working environment, as well as of the openness, inclusivity and transparency of parliamentary operations.

The Parliament discovered that it was able to call upon its own parliamentary staff and take ownership of the assessment, making it a more strategic document that responded to its needs.

Most importantly, the Senate identified the 14 opportunities below to strengthen the institution, of which at least five related directly to gender equality:

- Establishing a Parliamentary Budget Office
- Establishing a Bureau as the collective governing body of Parliament, with representation from both houses
- Strengthening the role of Parliament in the appointment of Ministers and Cabinet members
- Strengthening of the role of the Senate with respect to the Money Bill, with special reference to the role of Senators in proposing amendments to the Money Bill and approving the budget
- Ensuring that Pakistan's national legal framework is consistent with international human rights obligations
- Introducing a constitutional or legal provision related to conflicts of interest, which would require lawmakers to declare sponsored travel and accommodation
- Regulating the practice of lobbying by individuals or groups, each with varying and specific interests, which attempt to influence decisions taken at the legislative level
- Establishing legal provisions relating to equal physical and online access to the parliamentary building, its processes and proceedings, for all citizens, regardless of disability or other special needs
- Developing an impact assessment manual, guide or similar document that establishes procedures and criteria for assessing the impacts that a proposal for a law, a programme or a policy might have on different groups, and potentially entrusting such assessments to a dedicated body
- Devising policies and/or plans on gender mainstreaming and considering the gender lens when formulating parliamentary policies
- Holding workshops or dialogue sessions for Senators and Secretariat staff on bringing gender-responsive budgeting into the mainstream
- Periodically assessing gender balance in the Secretariat in order to ensure the effectiveness of related policies, particularly at senior levels
- Amending the Senate's rules of procedure to enable Senators and Secretariat staff to care for young children during the conduct of legislative business, and introducing online voting and video-conferencing facilities to help senators and staff with caring responsibilities to exercise their duties
- Introducing childcare facilities for Senators and Secretariat staff

The IPU, in matters of democracy and parliamentary strengthening, does not dictate but rather facilitates so that parliaments drive the process, therefore fostering a sense of ownership and legitimacy. Pakistan is a case in point.



## POLICY GOAL 3 – HUMAN RIGHTS

IPU data shows that more and more parliamentarians are facing abuse, mistreatment or even death simply for doing their jobs. This is especially true for opposition MPs, who make up the large majority of cases, many of which relate to denials of their freedom of expression. To support these MPs and even democracy itself, the IPU defends and promotes the human rights of parliamentarians through its dedicated Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

### Visiting an imprisoned MP in Iraq

In August, Members of the IPU Committee travelled to Iraq, pleading for the swift release of an opposition MP who had been arrested arbitrarily a decade earlier.

The arrest had happened early one morning in December 2013, when more than 50 security officials arrived at the home of Ahmed Al-Alwani in the town of Ramadi, west of Baghdad. Mr. Al-Alwani reportedly offered to surrender, but a gunfight ensued, killing his brother and seven other people.

In violation of his parliamentary immunity, Mr. Al-Alwani was arrested without warrant, held incommunicado for a month and tortured. He was then sentenced to death by hanging.

Aware that the execution could take place any day, the IPU Committee had expressed its interest in visiting Iraq since the moment it had been made aware of the case but, for ten years, violence, political fragility and the COVID-19 pandemic made such a mission impossible.

Finally, when the pandemic came to an end and the country became more secure, the IPU was able to identify and contact key individuals, building trust and setting the scene for a long overdue visit to Baghdad.

In Geneva, the IPU Secretary General met with the Iraqi Ambassador. The IPU then made an official request to visit Mr. Al-Alwani and the Iraqi authorities welcomed the mission.

The team for the three-day trip included the IPU Committee President at the time, Belgian MP Samuel Cogolati, as well as Committee member, Pakistani MP and former journalist Mushahid Hussein, who knows the region well.

The team met with multiple officials, including the President of Iraq, and the Speaker and members of parliament, together with Mr. Al-Alwani's lawyer, tribal chief, brother and son, who had not seen his father for a decade.



Mr. Mushahid Sayed Hussain (member of the Senate of Pakistan)/ Mr. Ershad Al-Salihi, Chair of the Human Rights Committee of the Parliament of Iraq/Mr. Samuel Cogolati (member of the Federal Parliament of Belgium, President of the Committee, and head of the delegation). © IPU/B. Lamharzi

The meeting with Mr. Al-Alwani was emotional. He had been receiving messages from the IPU via his brother, but had never met any IPU representative, and was candid about his arrest, the physical abuse and torture he had suffered, as well as his small cell, confinement and isolation from the outside world. The conditions of his detention had improved over the years however, and he was now able to phone his family, receive visits and even have vital surgery while in detention.

The situation of Mr. Al-Alwani has yet to be resolved, as he still faces the threat of execution.

But the visit showed that the authorities were keen to resolve his case, showing good faith at the highest levels. Meanwhile, the IPU demonstrated its reluctance to give up on longstanding cases, instead waiting and seizing an opportunity when it came, even after a decade's wait. Experience has shown that a mix of dialogue, steadfastness and patience pays off.



## POLICY GOAL 4 – GENDER EQUALITY

Although the proportion of women MPs is growing, most parliaments remain male-dominated, and women MPs are often under-represented in leadership positions. Even when men and women are represented in equal numbers, however, they might still face very unequal treatment or opportunities. Many women MPs still face discrimination and gender-based violence, for example. Convinced of the links between gender equality and strong democracies, the IPU focuses its work on gender equality on promoting more women in parliament as well as ensuring that parliaments are more gender sensitive.

### Informing a new strategy against sexism and harassment in the Parliament of Iceland

Iceland has an excellent record on gender equality, topping the World Economic Forum's ranking of most gender equal country for 14 consecutive years. It was also the first country to elect a female president, Vigdis Finnbogadóttir, who won the 1980 presidential election as well as the next three. The Parliament, the Althingi, almost became the first European country to elect a female-majority parliament in 2021, but after a recount narrowly missed the target, with women winning 30 out of 63 seats.

But gender equality goes further than numbers and rankings: it requires equal treatment and opportunity too. In 2017, for example, the #MeToo movement raised awareness around the world of sexual harassment, assault and abuse against women in all walks of life, including parliaments.

The [IPU's 2018 analysis on sexism, harassment and violence against women in European parliaments](#), published in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of

Europe, revealed that some 82.5% of respondents reported having suffered psychological violence during their time in office.

The data showed that many women in parliaments felt unsafe, so the Althingi decided to take a closer look. The parliamentary authorities looked for lessons learned by other parliaments and reached out to the IPU for help. IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong visited the country for the first time in 2018 to lend his support.

In 2020, the Parliament conducted a study on its working environment for both MPs and staff. The results demonstrated the need to take steps to address sexual and gender-based harassment and bullying in the parliamentary premises.

The Althingi first established a committee on gender equality, comprising MPs and staff, and then began to develop a plan. The plan includes preventive actions and provides guidelines on handling cases of sexism and harassment, ensuring that the complainant has access to advice and support throughout the procedure. Following an exhaustive and consultative process with each parliamentary group within the chamber, the Althingi adopted its new Strategy and Action Plan in May 2023.

In the plan, the Althingi followed many of the recommendations of the [IPU guidelines on how to develop and implement policies to end sexism and genderbased violence in parliament](#).

Implementation is an ongoing project. At the time of writing, Iceland's MPs and parliamentary staff can expect further training courses in 2024, focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.

A follow-up survey is also planned to see what has changed since the 2020 study and whether Iceland can further enhance its already impressive gender equality credentials.

Indeed, as the Icelandic case has shown, we cannot afford to be complacent about democracy and gender equality.



The Althingi © Parliament of Iceland



## POLICY GOAL 5 – YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Young people will bear the consequences of today’s decisions more than anybody else and yet too often they are excluded from the decision-making process. According to IPU data, under 30s represent less than 3% of all MPs, although some 50% of the world’s population is younger than 30 years old. This constitutes a major gap in many of our democracies. For over a decade, the IPU has been supporting parliaments to represent all generations more effectively, while empowering young MPs through networking, training and motivational campaigns.

### Mexico picks up the baton from Paraguay

Launched in April 2021, the IPU’s [I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!](#) campaign continued to yield results in 2023.

Inviting parliamentarians and others to sign up for six key pledges, the campaign aims to correct the significant under-representation of youth in parliaments. And it appears to be resonating widely, with the momentum for change spreading in Latin America too.

The six pledges are to: promote youth quotas, align the age of eligibility for office with the voting age, support youth channels in parliament, empower young parliamentarians, mentor young aspirants, and advocate for youth participation.

Paraguay was an early adopter of the campaign, successfully passing a new law in 2022 to lower the ages of eligibility for municipal office and for the role of councillor, thanks to lobbying by two Senators.

Inspired by Paraguay, which had also hosted the IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in 2019, Mexican opposition MP and current President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, Cynthia López Castro, championed a new law in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies to lower the age of eligibility from 21 to 18 years old.

The bill passed two years later after intensive lobbying, media coverage, advocacy efforts in the country’s schools and universities, and cross-party support, including from government majority MPs, to get the bill across the line.

Looking to the future, the campaign’s advocates say that its pledges could shape the future of democracy for many generations to come.

The campaign was also launched in Chile and Uruguay in 2023 and early results are promising.



Ms. Cynthia López Castro (Mexico). © IPU/Joel Sheakoski



## POLICY GOAL 6 – PEACE AND SECURITY

The IPU has been connecting MPs since its establishment in 1889, encouraging them to resolve their countries' differences through dialogue and diplomacy rather than armed conflict. More recently, the IPU's 2022-2026 Strategy confirmed that parliaments are the IPU's core audience but that they do not operate in isolation. To have greater impact, the IPU also needs to connect parliaments with the wider ecosystem in which they operate including governments, civil society, faith-based organizations, and representatives of religions and beliefs.

### Connecting politics and religion to promote peaceful coexistence

Like some of the parliaments that it serves, the IPU has traditionally stayed away from directly addressing religion and belief, although, in the past, they have been incorporated as a lens through which to examine some of our work, notably to support parliamentary action to eradicate female genital mutilation.

But with religious hatred on the rise around the world, and religious rhetoric used by terrorist groups to entice new recruits – in the Sahel for example – the IPU is increasingly concerned by how religion and belief are being misused to justify political actions.

As a result, and following the requests of its Member Parliaments, the IPU has recently begun engaging more directly with issues around religion and belief, appreciating that parliamentarians and religious and belief leaders alike can act as a bulwark against the growing spread of hatred, extremism and violence. While these two groups have different mandates, they share the goal of serving their communities and working in the best interests of their societies.

With that in mind, the IPU partnered with the Parliament of Morocco and other partners to organize a three-day Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in June. For the first time at a global level, the meeting connected MPs with religious and belief leaders, the UN, academia and civil society to discuss alliances to promote the rule of law, peaceful coexistence and inclusion.

Hundreds of parliamentarians came from 70 countries to attend the Morocco meeting, while its outcome document – [the Marrakesh Communiqué](#) – called for an end to hatred. It encouraged parliaments to be more mindful and inclusive of faith and religion when developing national legislation and international commitments, and in promoting social cohesion.



Religious leaders were invited to the New Zealand Parliament after the Christchurch mosque attacks in 2019. © VNP/Daniela Maoate-Cox

The Morocco meeting followed on from other IPU work intersecting with religion or belief.

In February, a two-day meeting jointly organized by the IPU and the Parliament of Algeria focused on terrorism in the Sahel, looking also at the role of religious, community and traditional leaders in helping prevent violent extremism.

In March, almost 140 Member Parliament delegations adopted the [Manama Declaration](#) at the 146th IPU Assembly in Bahrain, demanding that parliamentarians outlaw all hate-motivated acts and forms of violence linked to religion, belief, xenophobia, racism and intolerance.

And in June, the IPU's report on [religion and belief](#) considered ways that religion and belief are institutionally present in the life and work of parliaments, drawing on survey data and interviews with members and staff of 81 national parliaments.

The IPU remains true to its original mission of facilitating dialogue, often offering less formal channels than other multilateral organizations, but it has also broadened its reach to include new and non-State actors.

At the end of the Conference in Marrakesh, the Parliament of Italy offered to host a subsequent interfaith meeting, inviting participants to Rome in 2025, a jubilee year for the Catholic Church with the motto "Pilgrims of Hope".



## POLICY GOAL 7 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

With only a few years left to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it has become increasingly urgent to mobilize parliaments around the global development agenda. Parliaments' legislative, oversight and budget responsibilities make them key players in, for example, reducing social and economic inequalities, improving the health of the people they represent, and taking action to reduce the impacts of climate change.

### Enhancing our partnership with the Uzbek Parliament to implement the SDGs

As part of a wider strategic objective to connect parliaments with UN processes, the IPU invests in support for parliamentary implementation of the SDGs. Through our annual survey, we encourage parliaments to contribute to the preparation of voluntary national reviews, the UN process through which countries present their progress on the SDGs.

While the IPU surveys show uneven parliamentary engagement in the process, Uzbekistan stands out as a good example of a parliament that has taken IPU recommendations to heart. It has gone further than many countries by institutionalizing the connection between parliament and the SDGs.

Momentum for Uzbekistan's parliamentary focus on the SDGs accelerated when the Parliament's SDG Commission was set up in February 2020. Composed of members from both houses of the bicameral Oliy Majlis, the Commission mainstreams the SDGs throughout core governmental functions and holds the government to account on implementation.

In 2020, during preparations for Uzbekistan's voluntary national review, the SDG Commission was actively involved. It shared its conclusions with the Oliy Majlis and government, suggesting changes to legislation, policies and programmes.

In 2022, the country went even further by initiating a UN General Assembly resolution on the critical role of national parliaments in bringing the SDGs to life, a historic first. Thanks to intense lobbying by Uzbekistan, some 80 Member States sponsored the resolution *Enhancing the role of parliaments in accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, which also mentions the IPU five times.

In 2023, in a webinar organized as a follow-up to the resolution, in collaboration with the UN's Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and its Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Chairwoman of the Uzbek Senate delivered the keynote speech to further raise awareness of the issue.

That same year, Uzbekistan also presented its initiatives at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the central UN platform for follow-up and review of the SDGs.

And later, at a subsequent conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan – the Second Global Forum on Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals – the IPU Secretary General re-emphasized the importance of strengthening collaboration between parliaments on delivery of the SDGs.

In a country that faces numerous challenges, particularly due to climate change, Uzbekistan's development strategy for 2022-2026 has reoriented the country's public and private financial priorities in line with the SDGs, thanks partly to support from the IPU.

The Uzbekistan case study is a good example of mutual accountability between the IPU and a Member Parliament as articulated in the current IPU Strategy.



Akmal Saidov, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Uzbekistan and former member of the IPU Executive Committee, addresses the UN in Geneva.  
© UN Photo/Jean Marc Ferré

# Towards universal membership

## Member Parliaments (180)

Afghanistan\*\*, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia (The), Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti,\* Honduras\*, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar\*\*, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea\*, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## Associate Members (15)

Andean Parliament, Arab Parliament, Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), European Parliament, Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS), Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO), MERCOSUR Parliament (PARLASUR), Pan-African Parliament, Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Parliament of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (APF).

\* Non-participating Members (all rights suspended)

\*\* Members participating in the work of the IPU in a non-voting observer capacity

## Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

The Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) brings together Secretaries General and other senior office holders in charge of parliamentary services. It studies the law, procedure, practice and working methods of different parliaments and proposes measures for improvement and for securing cooperation between the services of different parliaments. It is a consultative body of the IPU, and the ASGP President reports annually to the IPU Executive Committee on the ASGP's activities. The ASGP assists the IPU on subjects within the scope of the Association. Studies carried out by the IPU relating to parliamentary law and practices are routinely shared with the ASGP and benefit from its input.

The ASGP collaborated closely with the IPU, including by regularly organizing joint IPU-ASGP sessions at the IPU Assembly. To give just three examples of areas of mutual cooperation:

The IPU and ASGP jointly published a Guide to digital transformation in parliament in October 2023 and organized a joint workshop on digital transformation at the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly. The guide drew upon inputs from ASGP members and parliamentary ICT directors to set out good practices in leading a digital transformation process. Collaboration continued in other research projects as well, including a joint initiative on the induction of new members of parliament. Secretaries General took part in online focus groups during the preparation of the IPU's Indicators for democratic parliaments, which were also published in October 2023. In ASGP meetings, Secretaries General shared their experience on a range of topics on which IPU is active, including combating gender-based violence in parliament, citizen participation in the work of parliament, the use of AI in parliaments, among others. This fruitful exchange is an important means of sharing good practices and informing thinking within the IPU, ASGP and national parliaments.

# IPU Executive Committee



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## How the IPU is funded

The IPU's work to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development is financed primarily by our Members and Associate Members. We also receive a regular flow of voluntary contributions from governments, development agencies, UN bodies and foundations. Several donors have concluded multi-year funding agreements that were active during 2023. These include the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the European Commission, Global Affairs Canada, Irish Aid, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and the parliaments of China,

Micronesia, Qatar, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the Arab Parliament and the Arizona State University's Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory. Partnerships with the UN family, particularly UNDP, WHO, UN-OHRLLS, UNESCO, UNHCR and UN Women, deliver support to a number of activities and country-level programmes. The Republic of Korea has continued to offer support in terms of secondment of senior research staff to the IPU. The IPU remains committed to looking for more voluntary funding to help meet its strategic objectives.

# 2023 publications

## Issues briefs

- [Responding to climate change in the mountains: Opportunities for parliamentarians to act](#)

## Handbooks

- [The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol: Handbook for Parliamentarians](#)
- [Guidelines for Parliamentary Libraries \(3rd edition\)](#) (now available in French, Spanish and Portuguese)
- [Nationality and Statelessness](#) (now available in Uzbek-cyrillic and Uzbek-latin)

## Toolkits

- [Indicators for Democratic Parliaments](#)
- [Parliaments and Human Rights- A self-assessment toolkit](#)
- [Evaluating the gender sensitivity of parliaments: A self-assessment toolkit](#) (now available in Mongolian)

## Reports

- [Youth participation in national parliaments: 2023](#)
- [Parliamentary report on religion and belief](#)
- [Impact Report 2022](#)
- [Women in parliament 2022](#)

## Reference publications

- [Guide to digital transformation in parliaments](#)
- [10 actions for greener parliaments](#)

## Infographics

- [Youth in Parliament infographic 2023](#)
- [Violations of the human rights of MPs – 2023](#)
- [Women in Politics: 2023](#)

# IPU collections

The IPU has seven collections primarily meant for parliamentarians and policymakers. All IPU publications are available [here](#).

**Issues Briefs** are designed to raise awareness on a particular issue. They give an overview of a particular theme with statistics, tables, graphs, facts and figures.

**Handbooks** are an in-depth look at a theme designed for legislators involved in preparing laws and policies. They contain best practice, examples from other countries, definitions of key concepts, background information and advice for implementation.

**Toolkits** allow parliaments to self-evaluate what they have, what's missing and what action they need to take in a particular area.

**Reports** generally go into detail on a particular strategic theme to report on progress or setbacks. They contain new data and are published either annually or periodically.

**Reference publications** are designed as guidelines to help support parliamentary development.

**Guidelines** are aimed to turn attention from analysis to solutions. They support and better equip parliaments in efforts to put their own houses in order.

**Infographics** are usually in the form of maps to highlight visually a particular theme.

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