



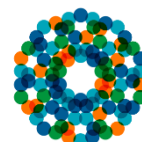
Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Fifth Expert Roundtable on the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments

The Common Principles at ten years: Charting the next decade of parliamentary self-development

Salle Genève, CCV Annex building, CICG, Geneva

28 March 2024



Ten years:
Common principles,
common progress

ROUNDTABLE REPORT

Background

The Common Principles were adopted at the 131st IPU Assembly in October 2014. Rooted in over 40 years of collective wisdom and experience, they were developed by parliaments themselves and for the last decade have been a beacon to guide both parliaments and partners towards more effective support. At their heart is the vision that parliaments must be in the driving seat of their own development. They have since been endorsed by 180 parliaments and partner organizations, including 77% of national parliaments.

As 2024 is the ten-year anniversary of the Common Principles, the Fifth Expert Roundtable brought together parliaments and support partners to reflect on the current state of parliamentary development, anticipate future trends, and help identify new tools and products for the parliamentary community. It also was a platform to exchange ideas on how to celebrate the ten-year anniversary both within parliaments and at the IPU.

Thirty-three participants took part in the Roundtable, representing 11 national and regional parliaments and 8 partner organizations.

Common Principles for Support to Parliaments

Ten years:

Common principles, common progress



Introductory remarks

Mr. Najib El Khadi, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) and Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Morocco, underscored the importance of the Common Principles in strengthening parliaments, of sharing good practices and the consolidation of lessons learned. The participation of the ASGP was unwavering to furthering these shared objectives.

Ms. Kareen Jabre, Director, Division of Programmes, IPU, welcomed the participants and recapped the origins of the Common Principles. She emphasized how they were crafted in an inclusive process with parliaments and partners and, therefore, belonged to the entire parliamentary community. She highlighted examples of how they had positively impacted parliamentary support projects, and previewed some of the activities which would take place to celebrate the tenth anniversary over the year.

Session 1: The Common Principles at ten years: How have the Common Principles been applied in your Parliament or organization and how have they contributed to better parliamentary development?

“These Principles must be domesticated and enshrined in the standing orders, so that they go beyond individuals and stand the test of time.”

During the first session, participants reflected on the past decade, examining specific instances of how the application of the Common Principles has influenced the development of parliaments and organizations. Ms. K. Jabre (IPU) moderated the session.

Mr. Roy Ngulube, Clerk of the National Assembly of Zambia, drew attention to how reforms in the National Assembly of Zambia were aligned with the Common Principles. For

example, the National Assembly was better addressing gender equality and inclusion of all political tendencies by alternating presiding officers and chairs/vice-chairs of committees by gender and political party (Common Principles 4 and 6). He emphasized the need for the Common Principles to be domesticated and institutionalized so they endure over time.



Mr. Nyokabi Kamau, Executive Director of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST), outlined the process of domesticating the Common Principles within the CPST and how specific principles were applied. For example, Common Principle 1 had been effectively enforced in Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to ensure staff trainings were responsive to parliament's needs. In collaboration with the IPU, a gender assessment was conducted in 2016 in alignment with Common Principle 6, which resulted in the establishment of childcare facilities in parliament to better enable women's participation. Mr. Kamau emphasized the importance of parliaments owning their own development and the institutionalization of

parliamentary support within legislative or regulatory frameworks to promote continuity.

Mr. Juan de Dios Cincunegui, Deputy Director of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies, Research and Prospective, and Executive Director of the International Diploma in Parliamentary Diplomacy at the Universidad Austral, stressed the need for trust on the part of both support partners and parliaments to ensure that support was genuine and relevant to local needs. Democratic values are also essential to have a successful provision of support to parliaments. He also emphasized how the complexity of current global changes and future technological trends made governing and predicting the future difficult, challenging democracies and parliaments, the latter being institutions often created centuries ago. Parliaments accounting for the overlapping of social, economic and political contexts (Common Principle 2) to continuously change and improve was, therefore, essential. The importance of leveraging the pluralistic nature of parliaments and conducting support in an ethical manner was also highlighted.

“If we do not improve our parliaments properly and make them better serve the people, the threat that democracy will face will be enormous and dangerous.”

An interactive discussion ensued where participants shared their own country's or organization's experiences. The importance of building capacity of MPs and parliament to better engage with citizens using modern technologies was highlighted. The increasing trend of parliamentary support taking place virtually, which brought many benefits but also challenges, was noted. Many participants also stressed the importance of presenting and promoting the Common Principles during inductions or the welcoming of new parliamentarians.

Session 2: Charting the future: What actionable tools or products would be useful to further help parliaments and partners enhance application of the Common Principles in the years ahead?

The second session focused on tools to help support implementation of the Common Principles and stimulating innovation. It was moderated by Mr. Jonathan Murphy, Programme Manager of International IDEA's Inter Pares project.

Ms. Marta Udina, Head of the Parliamentary Support and Capacity Building Unit at the European Parliament, presented its Strategic Execution Framework (SEF), a tool used by the European Parliament to set strategic goals and engage staff in training and innovation. The SEF set out the Parliament's strategic vision for its administration and encouraged staff to contribute creative ideas through project proposals. Staff were invited to present programmes that included objectives, milestones, resources and stakeholders, including in dedicated "Innovation days". Managing change and innovative ideas in a balanced way so they secured buy-in from stakeholders was also discussed.

Mr. Andy Richardson, Programme Manager of Parliamentary Standards Setting and Knowledge Generation at the IPU, presented the [Indicators for Democratic Parliaments](#). Consisting of some 500 evaluation criteria. The Indicators were developed by a multi-stakeholder group and served as a comprehensive self-assessment tool to help parliaments assess their capacity and practices against established democratic standards. It accounted for both parliamentary rules and practices, and were applicable to all parliaments, regardless of political system or level of development. The tool was based on the Common Principles, for example, by providing an international standard for parliaments (Common Principle 5) and promoting sustainable outcomes (Common Principle 3).



Participants broke out into working groups to respond to questions aimed at identifying tools or products to enhance the application of the Common Principles and innovation. Groups reported back in plenary. Comments made included the following:

- To enhance application of the Common Principles, it was important for relevant political leaders and parliamentary staff to have sufficient knowledge of them. In addition to Speakers of Parliament and MPs, this included Secretaries General, internal research staff and parliamentary training institutes (PTIs). The Common Principles, as well as information documents about them should be shared with these key stakeholders. Including information about the Common Principles when conducting induction activities to new MPs or staff could also be useful.
- Inclusion of the Common Principles in MoUs between parliaments and partners, and when evaluating offers of support, were also useful practices to promote implementation.
- Some parliaments had special bodies dedicated to promoting innovation and internal functioning which were comprised of parliamentarians from multiple political parties and senior staff. This not only enhanced innovation but also communication between MPs and staff.

Session 3: Celebrating common progress: How can parliaments and partners raise awareness of the Common Principles and celebrate the tenth anniversary?



Looking ahead to the ten-year anniversary at the 149th IPU Assembly in October 2024, participants exchanged ideas on how to celebrate the milestone and promote awareness of the Common Principles in their countries. The session was moderated by Mr. Alexander Kravetz, Country Director of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Iraq.

Ms. Bettina Giesecke, Head of Division, International Exchange Programmes at the German Bundestag, suggested various strategies to raise awareness by parliaments, such as communications tools and the posting of articles on social media. For example, to commemorate the ten-year anniversary, a QR

code directing people to the Common Principles website and common branding could be used by the Bundestag when communicating. Ultimately, active implementation of the Common Principles was the best way to celebrate the anniversary.

Ms. Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Thailand, stressed the need to raise awareness to achieve higher levels of endorsement of the Common Principles. Anniversary celebrations were useful to this end. The translation of the Common

Principles to local languages, as had been done in Thailand, was also helpful to raise awareness. She also suggested that key leaders, such as the IPU President and Speakers of Parliament, share messages (video or on social media) to promote the Common Principles and share good practices. Endorsement could also be promoted through IPU geopolitical groups. Ms. Taipiboonsuk also emphasized engaging the younger generation of MPs and staff to promote the Principles, as well as the media they were using to communicate, such as WhatsApp.

Ms. Kareema Alabbasi, Secretary General of the Shura Council in Bahrain, remarked that to celebrate the anniversary, the Shura Council planned to organize an inter-generational event where senior and former MPs and staff engage with the newer generation to exchange knowledge and strategies to enhance self-development. The event could look at challenges in implementing the Common Principles, successes and the creation of an action plan with concrete steps to address gaps.

In the ensuing interactive discussions, as well as working group sessions, additional insights raised by participants included the following:

- In addition to a QR code and branding, a hashtag on the Common Principles could be created to encourage engagement.
- Renewed efforts could be made to engage donor agencies to endorse and apply the Common Principles, which would create a domino effect in support of projects.
- Participants flagged future national and regional meetings which could be used to promote and discuss the Common Principles, for example meetings in Argentina and Zambia.
- The International Day of Parliamentarism (30 June) and the International Day of Democracy (15 September) could be used as occasions to promote the Common Principles.
- The anniversary celebrations at the upcoming 149th IPU Assembly (October 2024) would be a good occasion to hold an activity to share experiences on the Common Principles, especially between older and newer generations, as well as to launch a declaration from the IPU leadership to draw attention and celebrate the anniversary. Promotional materials (badges, pens, etc.) could also be prepared.

Closing remarks

Mr. Jonathan Lang, Project Officer of the IPU Technical Cooperation Programme, thanked the participants for their valuable contributions, which would help shape the future direction of the Common Principles. He reiterated that the Common Principles were created as a collaborative project involving parliaments and partners, and that they belonged to all. He invited all parliaments and partners to join in the anniversary celebration throughout 2024, and especially at the next IPU Assembly in October.



Annex 1: List of participants

PARLIAMENTS

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|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Argentina | Mr. Juan de Dios Cincunegui Advisor, Senate; Deputy Director of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies, Research and Prospective; and Executive Director of the International Diploma in Parliamentary Diplomacy, Universidad Austral |
| Bahrain | Ms. Kareema Alabbasi, Secretary General, Shura Council |
| Benin | Ms. Dédévi Eugénie Chantal Ahyi Member, National Assembly Ms. Ahouéfa Adeline Natacha Kpochan Member, National Assembly Mr. Mariano Ogoutolou Secretary General, National Assembly |
| Chile | Ms. Loreto Carvajal Senator, Senate |
| European Parliament | Ms. Marta Udina Head of Parliamentary Support and Capacity Building Unit |
| Germany | Ms. Bettina Giesecke Head of Division – International Exchange Programmes, German Bundestag |
| Morocco | Mr. Najib El Khadi Secretary General, House of Representatives Mr. Abdelwahad Driouche General Councillor, House of Councillors |
| Philippines | Mr. Renato Bantug Secretary General, Senate Mr. Antonio De Guzman Jr. Director General, Office of International Relations and Protocol, Senate Ms. Maria Jose Altavas Legislative Staff Officer, Senate Ms. Kary Mei Villaflor Legislative Staff Officer, Senate |
| Thailand | Ms. Steejit Taipiboonsuk Deputy Secretary General, House of Representatives Mr. Kanon Sukpornchairak Foreign Affairs Officer, House of Representatives |
| United Kingdom | Mr. Liam Laurence Smyth Clerk of Legislation, House of Commons Mr. Rick Nimmo Director, British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) |

Zambia

Mr. Roy Ngulube
Clerk, National Assembly

Mr. Dominic Mwinamo
Executive Assistant to the Clerk, National Assembly

ORGANIZATIONS

**Parliamentary Assembly
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Mr. Pascal Christian Sawa
President, Network of Young Parliamentarians

Mr. Florian Giacobino
Advisor, Network of Young Parliamentarians

**Association of
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Parliaments (ASGP)**

Mr. Najib El Khadi
President

**Centre for Parliamentary
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Mr. Nyokabi Kamau
Executive Director

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