



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# 139<sup>th</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

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## Activities report by the President

### (a) On her activities since the 202<sup>nd</sup> session of the Governing Council

Dear fellow parliamentarians,

A year has now passed since I was entrusted with the Presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and before I proceed to recount my endeavours from the past months, I want to seize this opportunity to thank all the Members of our institution for their continued support, as well as to my work team in Mexico City.

It has certainly been a busy and intense year and I am certain that the remaining two years of my term will be even more so, as achieving more results is urgent and necessary, especially since the IPU still has many Members seeking to be involved in the initiatives that our institution spearheads.

When placing this first year in perspective, it is possible to state that the Presidency has been able to put forward and attain progress in relation to most of the commitments made during my campaign. Nonetheless, the state of affairs of our world pushes us to redouble our efforts. The welfare of the Earth and humanity demands us to work more, more efficiently, more professionally and in an even more committed way. This holds particularly true as the global deadline we have set ourselves for the year 2030 gets closer with the passing of each day. The 2030 Agenda, and our commitment to transform the reality of millions of people across the world, must continue to guide and inspire our efforts. The efforts to change the world must start from our own communities.

Beyond the scope of our institution's work, 2018 has also been an eventful year for our world, with both positive and negative developments across the globe. This year has seen the passing of a great leader and friend of our institution, who devoted his life to work for welfare of humanity: Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, an extraordinary African visionary is no longer with us. Mr. Gurirab will be forever remembered by the IPU for his eternal legacy and leadership within our Organization, but also for his country Namibia. I once again express my sincerest condolences, and invite us all to be guided by his humanism and vision for our work.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that as a result of the democratic process that my country underwent in recent months - that saw the election of over 18,000 public servants, and included my election as a Federal Deputy - the Mexican Congress seeks to re-energize its support and participation in the IPU through a series of projects and initiatives.



#IPU139

I have kept in regular contact with the Secretary General and IPU staff both at IPU Headquarters and at the New York Office.

As part of the 138<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly held on 24-28 March, I held meetings with the IPU geopolitical groups, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. This continues to fulfil my commitment to being a close and accessible President to all our Members. I will continue to arrange these meetings with the geopolitical groups, and will hold others with any committees and delegations that request my attention and support.

In addition, I engaged in other bilateral meetings with the delegations of several countries, seeking to enhance cooperation efforts between their respective parliaments and the IPU. Namely, on 24 March I met with representatives from China and Mongolia, and with the Speaker of the National Assembly of Viet Nam, Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. On 25 March, I met with the Speaker of the South African National Assembly, Ms. Baleka Mbete; the Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, Mr. Karunaratne Jayarasuriya; the Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro, Mr. Ivan Brajovic; and with the Speaker of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, Ms. Tsveta Valcheva Karayancheva. Furthermore, on 26 March, I attended an even larger number of meetings as follows: Mr. Mishal F. Al Sulami, Speaker of the Arab Parliament; Mr. Habib El Malki, Speaker of the Chamber of Representatives of Morocco; Mr. Jigme Zangpo, Speaker of the National Assembly of Bhutan; the delegation of Israel; the delegation of Thailand; the Speaker of the Senate of Algeria, Mr. Abdelkader Bensalah; the delegation of Eritrea; and the President of the Consultative Council of Qatar, Mr. Ahmed Bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud. Lastly, during the two remaining days I met with Ms. Na-Kyungwon from the Republic of Korea delegation; with Mr. Roger Nkodo-Dang, President of the Pan-African Parliament; with Mr. Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim, President of the National Assembly of Kuwait; the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; with Mr. Sam Rainsy from the Cambodian delegation; the delegation of Yemen; and the Foreign Affairs Commissions of France, Turkey, India and Ecuador.

On April 16-17 I travelled to Washington, D.C. to the Global Parliamentary Conference of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund focused on covering crucial topics such as international financing for development, economic stability, and the achievement of SDGs. This meeting was attended by over 150 parliamentarians from across 100 countries, and featured high-level authorities from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. During my intervention in this event, I stressed the challenges the world has in terms of unemployment and representation of young people, who are often the most vulnerable to the complications of unemployment.

I addressed the 12<sup>th</sup> Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament on 25 April 2018 in Cochabamba, (Plurinational State of Bolivia), held under the theme *Women Speakers: Working so every voice counts*. The Summit provided an opportunity to assess progress in women's leadership in parliaments, which stood at 51 women Speakers in 48 countries.

While I lamented that the road to gender equality remained long and tedious, I took hope from the fact that seeds of change were present. Women Speakers were no longer a small elite but were reaching a critical mass that could positively influence global governance much as they had changed the political landscape in their own countries.

I appealed to the Women Speakers present to use their collective talents, unique experiences and common will to accelerate change and transform parliaments so they could better deliver for all of the people. Their leadership would help make parliaments models for inclusiveness in society. I reminded them of the three conditions necessary for change: addressing women's underrepresentation; achieving inclusive societies and parliaments; and combating violence against women in politics.

Latin America in general and Bolivia in particular were shining examples of notable progress in building more inclusive parliaments, having recognized the right to fair and equal representation of ethnic minorities and disabled persons. They had also taken concrete action to address violence against women in all spheres in the home, at the workplace and in politics. I applauded these positive initiatives and encouraged other parliaments in the region and beyond to follow suit.

On 22 May I participated in the UN General Assembly debate on *Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU* at UN Headquarters in New York. Following the debate, a resolution on the same topic was adopted with 91 co-sponsors. H.E. Gómez Camacho, Ambassador of Mexico in New York, spearheaded the process of garnering support for that important resolution that is adopted every two years. As part of the preparatory process, several meetings were arranged

between H.E. Gómez Camacho, the IPU Secretariat and the IPU Presidency. I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank all the countries who sponsored this initiative, particularly to all the colleagues who travelled to UN Headquarters on that very important occasion for parliamentarians across the world. I would also like to express my gratitude and to commend the efforts of H.E. Gómez Camacho in the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN.

This resolution, in addition to being clearer and more concise than what was achieved in previous efforts, contains three important aspects that must be highlighted: 1) it proclaims 30 June as International Day of Parliamentarism starting in 2018; 2) it opens the possibility for parliamentarians to attend important coordination meetings at the UN Secretariat and; 3) it opened the door to new areas of cooperation, such as sustaining peace, interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue and countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. This was a major achievement for the IPU and for parliaments around the world.

This progress also resulted in an increase in representation and inclusiveness as it also allowed parliamentarians to attend important meetings, as opposed to the previous situation in which only the Secretariat was asked to participate in such meetings.

In addition, I saluted the efforts and negotiations for the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, two processes in which I was closely involved both personally and institutionally by working directly with the co-Facilitators who drafted the document and with the UNHCR respectively. I also attended work meetings with stakeholders – as informed in my previous report in March - and presided over events with UNHCR and as panellist on various occasions. The IPU was following developments closely and increasingly aligning the topics on its agenda with that of the United Nations.

Furthermore, with support from the IPU Secretariat, we drafted proposals to include a parliamentary role within the Global Compact, as our role in terms of implementation, budgeting and overall responsibilities will prove to be crucial. I am also pleased to report that – after constant meetings and follow-up with H.E. Gómez Camacho and H.E. Volker Turk throughout the entire process - both Global Compacts include mentions of the importance of parliamentary duties and responsibilities.

I travelled to Belgrade, Serbia, on 24 May to deliver the opening address at the Regional Seminar on the SDGs for the parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. That was the fourth edition of the SDGs seminar in that region, with MPs having previously gathered twice in Romania and once in Hungary. Those events had focused on climate change and the environment, health, poverty, inclusion and participation.

In response to the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, which were mainstreamed throughout the IPU strategy for 2017-2021, the IPU had produced a self-assessment toolkit to help parliaments get fit for purpose. Self-assessment exercises had been successfully conducted to date in Fiji, Djibouti, Georgia, Kenya, Mali and Namibia. Such events provided platforms for sharing experiences and knowledge at the parliamentary level. While there was no one-size-fits-all approach, best practices could certainly go a long way towards encouraging and inspiring other parliaments to play an active role in implementation of the SDGs.

During that event, I held meetings with the Speakers of the parliaments of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Duarte Pacheco, Chair of Twelve Plus Group, who also attended that event.

I convened the 279<sup>th</sup> (extraordinary) session of the Executive Committee on 17-18 June 2018 at IPU Headquarters in Geneva. That session was devoted almost exclusively to the discussion of proposed amendments to the IPU's Statutes and Rules. The Vice-President of the Executive Committee, Mr. Kosachev, had led consultations within the Executive Committee and geopolitical groups with a view to reaching consensus on a number of matters.

Throughout this year, we started an effort to improve and clarify the contents of our own legal framework, the IPU Statutes. I seize this opportunity to thank all parliaments and parliamentarians who have gotten involved in this process in order to build consensus. I express my gratitude in particular to Mr. Kosachev, who has dedicated constant efforts and a great deal of time to find the best route to proceed in this sense. My deepest gratitude also goes to the members of the Executive Committee, who have dedicated several days to travel to discuss this topic.

Regarding this point, it is also my duty to be transparent and sincere: it is very unlikely that we will reach the necessary consensus to give more certainty and clarity to the functions of all the parts that comprise our institution. While it is true that politics refers to the art of dialogue and the construction of agreements and compromises, it is also a reality that transforming an institution has proven to be a considerably difficult task.

On 11 July, I participated in the third edition of the South Asian Speakers' Summit on the SDGs held in Colombo, Sri Lanka. During the opening session, we had the honour of being joined by H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The event built on the achievements of the previous two summits, held in Bangladesh in 2016 and India in 2017. I underscored how proud the IPU was to facilitate the exchange of good practices and experiences among parliamentarians through that platform.

The summit provided a valuable opportunity to advance discussions on the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all, as stated in Goal 8. It also enabled the participants to reflect on the most appropriate strategies to eradicate forced labour, promote social protection and safe and secure working environments.

Yet despite the best efforts and initiatives, national ownership remained a challenge. The SDGs were still very much viewed as global goals for many and had not trickled down to the grassroots level. The onus would be on parliaments to sensitize their constituents, especially those in rural areas, to the SDGs through more consultations and to show them how achieving the Goals could improve their lives in different ways.

In parallel to this event, I held bilateral meetings with the following representatives: Mr. Abdul Raouf Ibrahim, Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga of Afghanistan; Mr. Tashi Dorji, Speaker of the National Council of Bhutan; Ms. Sumitra Mahajan, Speaker of the Lok Sabha; and Mr. Karu Jayasuriya, Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka.

As part of my commitment to ensure that the representation of the IPU at the United Nations is always visible and never vacant, I addressed the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at UN Headquarters in New York on 16 July. It is important to note that this is part of my Presidency's vision to increase the IPU's presence during important UN events.

I stressed that while all 17 Goals were important, the IPU placed strong emphasis on Goal 16, the so-called "governance" goal. Building transparent, inclusive and accountable institutions, starting with national parliaments, required painstaking efforts. That was exactly what the IPU did: help parliaments become more representative by strengthening their law-making and oversight functions. Yet despite gains, democracy-building remained an uphill battle almost everywhere. The international community should invest much more in governance, including conflict prevention, than ever before, in order for the SDGs to succeed.

Held under the main theme of sustainability and resilience, I underscored the illogical disconnect between the economy and the environment in absolute terms. After numerous discussions on the topic over the years at IPU events, the main finding to emerge was that in addition to efficiency, we must focus on sufficiency. A new economic model must be developed that was less dependent on consumption and more conducive to human happiness. Action was particularly important in developed countries, whose carbon footprint was well above average.

I appealed to the national delegations to the HLPF to include one or two MPs in their delegations so as to strengthen collaboration between the executive and legislative branches of the State. Parliaments were crucial to implementation and national ownership of the SDGs.

In addition to this, I participated in the Workshop devised for parliamentarians to get acquainted with the Self-Assessment Toolkit on SDG strategies and implementation, which was held at Uganda House in New York.

As the Secretary General was present in New York for that event, I seized the opportunity to discuss a number of issues with him. We agreed to streamline the agenda of the Executive Committee and the Governing Council and underscored the need for strict time management of the sessions of the governing bodies. We also identified a number of high-level personalities to be invited to the 139<sup>th</sup> Assembly, which would be held under the general theme of innovation. We discussed the SDGs financing workshop for the chairs of budget and finance committees, which was an activity I had put forward under my vision for the IPU. In addition, during this meeting we covered a lot of issues such

as the High-Level Steering Group on Every Woman Every Child; the International Day of Democracy; the 140<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Buenos Aires; the Regional Workshop for non-Member parliaments of the Caribbean; the Parliamentary Meeting at the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the Global Compact on Migration in Morocco; the World Investment Forum; the Geneva Peace Week panellists; the Annual Parliamentary Hearing in 2019; the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament; the P20 meeting in Buenos Aires; the Fifth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians; the proposed mission to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; the planned mission to the Middle East region; and the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO.

On 17 August, I attended a meeting with Mr. Pete Ricketts, Governor of the state of Nebraska, in which we discussed the relationship between the United States and the IPU. Due to the fact that Mr. Ricketts will be presiding over a Governors' Conference in 2019, I sought this opportunity to open the door for further discussions on promoting our efforts for the reaffiliation of the US Congress to our Organization.

On 1 September, I held a meeting with legislators from the Venezuelan National Assembly, during which we discussed the recent denouncement of human rights violations against parliamentarians and the possibility of sending an IPU fact-finding mission to Venezuela. It is important to mention that we are constantly working – despite the difficulty of the task - to send a mission that would listen to all involved parties, to find a humanitarian solution to the crisis.

On 19-21 September, I attended the Second Eurasian Women's Forum in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, in which I delivered a speech during the plenary session, entitled *Women for Global Security and Sustainable Development*. In addition to this, I participated in the panel on *Women for balanced economic growth*, and the W20 meeting. I also held meetings with Ms. Matviyenko, Chairperson of the Council of the Federation; Ms. Samoura from FIFA; Dr. Al Qubaisi from the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates; and Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. It is important to mention that this report was prepared two weeks ahead of the Assembly and therefore might require some updates.

On 23 September, I also co-chaired the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) Accountability Breakfast at the Westin Hotel in New York City. This event was led by Ms. Michelle Bachelet – Chair of the PMNCH - and focused on efforts to strengthen results, resources and rights, including through the partnership of all stakeholder groups – governments, parliamentarians, media, NGOs, youth groups, the private sector, UN, donors, academia, and others. After the main event concluded, I attended a high-level meeting with Ms. Bachelet.

On 24 September, I attended the session entitled *Emerging challenges and shifting paradigms: New perspectives on international cooperation for development*, the High-Level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit, where I delivered a speech remembering Madiba's legacy. Later in the evening I attended the 2018 Concordia Annual Summit, a high-level forum aimed at catalysing action through shared value approaches and social impact objectives. Participants included Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia and Mr. Michel Temer, President of Brazil and many other eminent speakers.

On 25 September, I attended the opening session of the UN General Assembly general debate. Afterwards, I was invited to the State Luncheon held by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. In the afternoon, I attended a second session of the 2018 Concordia Annual Summit.

On 26 September, I attended an event to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Human Rights Declaration, attended by the UN Secretary-General. Afterwards I had a meeting with Azerbaijani authorities to discuss the upcoming forum in the city of Baku. I then attended the event entitled *Road to Marrakech*, organized by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration, Brazil, Canada, Bahrain, Germany, Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines and Turkey. This event was devised to build momentum towards the Intergovernmental Conference that would take place in Morocco in December 2018. Lastly, I attended an event organized by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations in New York.

On 27 September, I attended a meeting of the Americas Society/Council of the Americas with Mr. Pedro Sánchez, Prime Minister of Spain. I then attended the Non-Communicable Diseases meeting, specifically the panels entitled *Strengthening health systems and financing for the prevention and control of NCDs* and *Opportunities and challenges in engaging governments, civil society and private sector at global, regional and national levels* at the Trusteeship Council.

On 28 September I participated in the in-person meeting of the High-Level Steering Group for Every Women Every Child (EWEC), of which I am now a member, at UN Headquarters in New York. The session was chaired by the UN Secretary-General and served to review the 2018 Report of the Independent Accountability Panel for EWEC. It also focused on the Global Financing Facility Replenishment Roadmap and heard updates from members, including the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH). The members provided feedback and identified concrete measures for support and outreach.

I made the most of the opportunity to liaise with the IPU Secretariat to finalize preparations for the 139<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

As part of the preparatory process to organize this Assembly, I have maintained communication and coordination with the IPU Secretariat. During this session, many new side events and innovations have been included on the agenda, such as a Fake News Workshop, the CEDAW Seminar, the Launch of an IPU-PACE study regarding violence against women, the Science and Policy Panel, and a Knowledge Fair for invited organizations to display their current technological projects. While making new additions and changes has not been an easy task, I am certain that with your feedback, proposals and the work of the Secretariat, we are taking steps in the right direction to make better and more useful Assemblies for parliamentarians around the world.

It is also important to note that – as promised during my campaign – the October Assembly will include a lunch meeting with regional parliaments, as I firmly believe the IPU must become a platform for the strengthening of regional and national dialogue, that will in turn enhance cooperation and international partnerships. In addition to this, alongside Mr. Kosachev, the Vice-President of the Executive Committee, we proposed the organization of an SDGs Financing Workshop at the United Nations Office at Geneva, with the support of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. This workshop will focus on how public resources can contribute to the effective attainment of the SDGs, and will review some of the most urgent steps parliaments can take to increase public revenue and strengthen fiscal policy consistent with the SDGs. It will also reflect on ways in which development can support these efforts in some countries.

In addition to this, the IPU will be holding a P20 meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, for the first time in our history. This event will provide the Speakers of the G20 and other invited parliaments with the opportunity to obtain expertise and first-hand knowledge on the theme of the G20 summit entitled *Building consensus for fair and sustainable development* and on how to build such a consensus which, in turn, will support future actions of parliaments in favour of fair and sustainable development.

I would like to emphasize that I have been personally and institutionally involved in the design and organization of these events, as I firmly believe in the importance of innovating within the context of a world in constant change. This has been done in absolute respect of the Secretary General's role in implementing parliamentary decisions, while also ensuring greater levels of participation and representation of our Members.

Regarding overall communications, the Presidency believes there is an important need to reform our strategies, as focusing them on Geneva will not help for the realities in our countries to be transformed by making the IPU more visible around the world. It is therefore crucial to understand that this is a parliamentary organization; synergies and collaborative work can attain more effective results than centralized work; and our organization has highly-specialized parliamentarians that could be more involved as spokespersons on certain topics. In light of this, I ask everyone – speakers, fellow parliamentarians, the Secretariat - to work together to create a communications strategy that truly gives relevance, content and transcendence to the work of the IPU.

Furthermore, a topic of great relevance for the IPU will be to define how we will commemorate our 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 30 June now belongs both to the foundation of our Organization and to the celebration of the International Day of Parliamentarism. This must not become a space in which the IPU's identity will be lost. On the contrary, this occasion must be used to strengthen it. As such, I would kindly ask that everyone becomes involved in making the most of this important occasion by celebrating our democratic values, our great achievements and by recognizing and celebrating the work of all parliamentarians across the world. We must not let this Day go by without showing the international community the great importance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

For the first time in the IPU's history – and with the conviction and commitment to democratize and decentralize our Organization's decision-making processes - the composition of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 World Conference of Speakers will no longer be determined by the Presidency and the Secretariat. Instead, this decision will be made in consultation with the geopolitical groups, which will be asked to present representation proposals during the upcoming Assembly.

I have committed to the promises I made to our Members. As such, I have been working constantly to ensure that the quality of our events is elevated, both in terms of conceptual depth and in the selection of panellists. This has not been an easy task; due to the fact that some budget adjustments will have to be made to ensure the participation of high-level guests, who often require payment for their work, or for their travel expenses. Due to these circumstances, I believe it is important and necessary to make budget revisions that will allow the IPU to increase the level and quality of our Assemblies and events. A part of these efforts must oversee the consolidation of our institution, to give it more relevance in order to attain more confirmations. A second element could contemplate the need to have all trips reserved in economy class, in order to allow for other daily allowances during the events.

As many parliaments around the world have focused on austerity measures and more efficient spending, it is time for the IPU to do the same. The use of our resources must be streamlined to attend to these urgent needs that will promote and strengthen the reputation of our institution, such as the contact and financing of high-level guests and panellists.

Lastly, being guided by the commitments I made during my campaign for the IPU Presidency, I have kept in close contact with the geopolitical groups, and alongside the Executive Committee, I have been pushing for the elaboration of projects and initiatives to innovate upon the IPU's existing efforts. If the Executive Committee and the Governing Council allow for these projects, I would like to inform you of a series of projects that I have been working on.

I have been working constantly in the organization of a new IPU leadership seminar designed for young parliamentarians, female parliamentarians and other parliamentarians who are about to attain positions of higher importance in the national life of their respective countries. For this project, I am about to finalize a draft programme, and am making good progress in getting funds for this new initiative.

Our Organization has not taught us yet to work as a team, or to generate networking. We go abroad from our respective countries, we prepare important resolutions, but we know very little about our colleagues around the world. Dear friends, the main strength of the IPU is its people, that group of more than 46,000 parliamentarians across the globe, the thousands of members who attend our events, the great leaders who meet during the Assemblies. I would like to make an additional effort to organize new spaces for dialogue – and while most of them will not be officially part of the programmes, nor will they be funded with IPU resources, as they come from national budgets - that will allow us to get to know each other better, and to foster communication bridges between our nations.

During this Assembly, I commit to meeting with the geopolitical groups and with the delegates to find the best proposals that will allow us to grow closer together as human beings, who can work together as friends and colleagues with a common view to change our world.

Lastly, to conclude this report, I would like to call upon my fellow parliamentarians to become even more involved in the work of the IPU. I encourage you to host more events, to promote the Assemblies, and to promote our efforts for improving the representation of the youth and female parliamentarians. With the challenges that still lie ahead of us, and with an urgent need to transform our world, our planet urges us to redouble your efforts to transform the reality of millions of human beings. The IPU and the world need as many people as possible working for humanity's sake. I trust we will all heed this urgent call to continue working for the greater good of this world.