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REPORT OF-

THE KENYA PARLIAMENT DELEGATION TO THE 149TH ASSEMBLY
AND RELATED MEETINGS OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY
UNION (IPU)

13TH TO 17TH OCTOBER, 2024

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

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DECEMBER 2024

Rt. Hon. Speaker
The report is in order for tabling. You may approve.
[Signature]
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APMBC	-	Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
AI	-	Artificial Intelligence
CHF	-	Swiss Franc
COVID-19	-	Corona Virus Diseases 19
INTOSAI	-	International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions
IPU	-	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MP	-	Member of Parliament
MPs	-	Members of Parliaments
SAI	-	Supreme Audit Institution
STI	-	Science, Technology and Innovation
UN	-	United Nations
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNO	-	United Nations Organization
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	-	United States of America
WHO	-	World Health Organization

ANNEXURES LIST

1. Minutes on consideration and adoption of this report
2. Calendar of IPU meetings for the Year 2025
3. Amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules
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FOREWORD

The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. The Union was formed in 1889 as a small group of parliamentarians dedicated to promoting peace through inter-parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue and has since grown into a truly global organization with one hundred and eighty-one (181) full members and fifteen (15) associate members.

The IPU facilitates parliamentary diplomacy and empowers parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action and sustainable development around the world. The Union's vision is to have a world where every voice counts and where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development.

The 149th IPU Assembly and related meetings were held from 13th to 17th October, 2024 at the Geneva International Conference Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. The Assembly's General debate's theme was "***Harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation for a More Peaceful and Sustainable Future.***" Delegations from 129 Member Parliaments attended the Assembly and related meetings. Eight (8) Associate members including the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) attended the Assembly while several organizations and non member countries attended the meeting as observers.

The Assembly was officially opened on 13th October, 2024 by Dr. Tulia Ackson, Speaker of Parliament of Republic of Tanzania and IPU President. The National Assembly's delegation to the meetings comprised:

- (i) Hon. Millie Odhiambo, MP - Minority Whip and President of the IPU Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians – ***Leader of the delegation***
- (ii) Hon. John W Kiarie, M.P. - President of the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
- (iii) Hon. Naisula Lesuada, MP - Member, IPU Committee on Sustainable Development
- (iv) Hon. Rebecca Tonkei, MP - Member, IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs
- (v) Hon. Geoffrey Mulanya, MP
- (vi) Mr. George Gazemba, Ag. Deputy Director, Directorate of Departmental Committees – ***Delegation secretary***

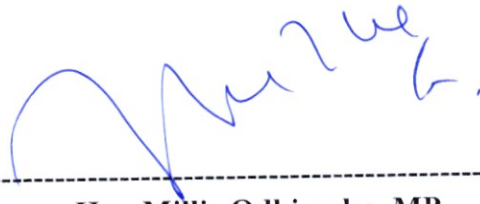
The Senate in which the IPU is domiciled in Parliament of Kenya did not send a delegation to the meeting due to the business of the impeachment of the Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya before the House in which all Senators were required to attend House sittings. The Senate Speaker or his representative is always the leader of the Kenyan Parliament delegation to IPU meetings and in the Senate's absence from this Assembly, Hon Millie Odhiambo, MP served as the Kenyan Parliament leader of delegation.

Hon. Millie Odhiambo in her capacity as chairperson of the IPU Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians chaired the Committee meetings and presented the Committee's report to the Assembly on 17th October, 2024. Hon. John Kiarie, Chairperson of the IPU's Committee on

Promotion of Respect to International Humanitarian Law, also chaired his committee meetings and presented a report to the Assembly on the same day. The reports were adopted as presented.

On behalf of the delegation, I take this opportunity to thank and commend the Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly for bestowing the delegation the role of representing the National Assembly in the IPU and participation in the 149th Assembly meeting and other past meetings.

Pursuant to Article 7 of the IPU Statutes, it's my privilege and honour to submit the report of the Kenyan Parliament delegation to the 149th IPU Assembly and related meetings held from 13th to 17th October, 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. This report summarises the proceedings of the Assembly and the related meetings.



Hon Millie Odhiambo, MP
Leader of Delegation

Dated this 4th day of December2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 149th IPU Assembly and related meetings took place from 13th to 17th October, 2024 at the Geneva International Conference Centre. The Assembly was officially opened on 13th October, 2024 by Dr. Tulia Ackson, Speaker of Parliament of Republic of Tanzania and IPU President.

All IPU statutory bodies including the Governing Council, Standing Committees, Committees on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and on the Middle East Questions, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and the Forum of Young MPs, held meetings and presented reports to the Governing Council for consideration and endorsement. All reports submitted by the bodies were endorsed and adopted.

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security held an expert hearing on “*the role of parliaments in advancing a two-state solution in Palestine*”. Various proposals were made to promote peace and stability in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including ending Israeli settlement expansion, legitimising the Palestinian Authority and fostering inter-parliamentary cooperation. The Committee acknowledged the importance of international law and the role of parliaments in advancing peace, alongside calls for recognising Palestine as a state and emphasising women's roles in peacebuilding. The Committee advocated for a peaceful and democratic negotiated settlement of the conflict.

The Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians conducted hearings on cases of human rights violations faced by several MPs in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Guinea Bissau, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Venezuela. The common violations against the MPs included attacks on freedom of expression, suspension or loss of parliamentary mandate, threats, intimidation, torture, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance.

The young MPs reported to the Assembly on recent developments in promoting youth participation in their respective countries under the campaign “*I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament! Campaign*”. This included recent elections where some young MPs had changed the building of new bridges with youth and children's parliaments and new training courses for young parliamentarians. They took stock of the results of the campaign's first three years and its successful impacts and agreed that the campaign and its pledges, remained relevant. They stressed, however, the additional challenge of finance as a key obstacle preventing young people from getting involved in politics. They re-emphasized their enthusiasm for mentoring and supporting young aspirants to run for office.

The inability of the Committee on Middle East Questions to take actionable steps towards de-escalating the conflict or facilitating dialogue between conflict parties in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and others had raised questions among Committee members about the Committee's effectiveness, mandate and role. The need to identify common ground based on dialogue and the joint desire to establish trust as a basis for continuing the committee's work was agreed upon by members.

The Forum of Women Parliamentarians informed the Assembly of its recent and future activities to promote gender equality and contributions to the work of the 149th Assembly from a gender

perspective. These activities were aimed at helping parliaments assess gender sensitivity, implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and support caucuses of women parliamentarians.

The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law reported to the Assembly on actions taken on selected humanitarian issues among them the situation of migrants and refugees in Malta and the guarantee of statelessness people in Bahrain access to basic services. The Committee discussed the latest report of the International Committee of the Red Cross and reviewed specific situations of humanitarian in Sudan where there are 8.1 million internally displaced persons and 2.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers in other countries.

The Assembly also considered the subject "*the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law in its recommendation*" called for increased international multi-stakeholder cooperation, collaboration, and exchange of information and experiences to ensure a united worldwide effort to maximise the benefits of AI, while mitigating risks to humanity, including through initiatives designed to reduce disparities in technological development between nations. It also called for urgent measures to bridge the divides among and within countries regarding digital infrastructure, connectivity and skills, including by removing digital gender barriers and scaling up international digital cooperation, as a precondition for equitable and inclusive access to AI benefits for all.

On the *response by parliamentarians to the urgent plea by the UN Secretary-General to recommit to multilateralism for global peace, justice and sustainability*, the Assembly among others reaffirmed its unwavering support for multilateralism both through the United Nations system and other key global and regional institutions and its attachment to an international order based on the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as laid out. It also *emphasizes* the urgent need for a collective response founded on renewed political will to cooperate at the international level and to share responsibilities across geopolitical divisions, to build a more peaceful world and create a better future for current and succeeding generations.

The Assembly's general debate focused on the overall theme "*Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future*" and accorded delegates the platform to deliberate, exchange views and galvanize parliamentary action. Under this agenda item, the Assembly discussed and amongst others resolved that Parliaments should address the complex challenges of an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world, leveraging strategic foresight to anticipate future trends, opportunities and risks. The Assembly also committed to fostering the more substantial involvement of women and youth in STI, including in education, public health, research, innovation and technology governance, and to the effective implementation of gender-responsive and youth-inclusive STI policies by ensuring that technological development processes integrate diverse perspectives and guarantee the equal and meaningful participation of all segments of the society.

The delegation recommends that the House takes note of this report and follows up on the Implementation of the Declarations and Resolutions of the 149th IPU Assembly and Related meetings where applicable.

PART 1

1. BACKGROUND

1. The IPU is an international organization of national parliaments headquartered in Geneva Switzerland with Offices in New York, USA and Vienna, Austria. The Union started off in 1889 as a small group of Parliamentarians dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue and has since evolved into a global organization with one hundred and eighty-one (181) full members and fifteen (15) associate members.
2. IPU's main objective is to promote parliamentary democracy and empower parliaments and parliamentarians. The Union aims to achieve this through promoting peace, democracy, inclusive and representative parliaments, resilience and innovation, strengthening transparency and accountability as well as sustainable development around the world. The Union's programmes and activities are majorly funded through annual membership subscription fees.
3. The IPU's vision is to have a world where every voice counts, where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development. The Union's mission is to be the global organization of national parliaments and promote democratic governance, institutions and values working with parliaments and parliamentarians to articulate and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. The Union works for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.
4. Since the year 2002, IPU has had a permanent observer status with the United Nations Organization (UNO). The Union works with the Organization to-
 - a) Bring the voice of Parliamentarians to the United Nations mechanisms and treaties
 - b) Help Parliamentarians translate the United Nations processes into action
 - c) Develop standards and guidelines for democratic governance.
5. The 149th IPU Assembly and related meetings were held from 13th to 17th October 2024 at the Geneva International Conference Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. Delegations from 129 Member Parliaments attended the Assembly and related meetings. The Parliaments which attended the Assembly and related meetings were Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia (The), Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New

Zealand, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Palestine, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Parliament of Brunei Darussalam also attended in an observer capacity, with a view to future affiliation.

6. The following 8 Associate Members also attended the Assembly: The Arab Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), The European Parliament, The Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), The Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO), Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (APF).
7. The following attended the Assembly as observers; the International Labour Organization (ILO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the World Health Organization (WHO), African Parliamentary Union (APU), Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU), Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), Collective Security Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (CSTO PA), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR), International Parliamentary Network for Education (IPNEd), Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), Maghreb Consultative Council (MCC), Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States (PUIC), Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) and UNITE Parliamentarians Network for Global Health.
8. The International and non-governmental organizations which attended the Assembly were Global Fund to Fight AIDS and the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). Other partner organizations attending the Assembly and related meetings were, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Development Law Organization (IDLO), League of Arab States and Sovereign Order of Malta.
9. Several special guests also attended the Assembly and gave addresses at high-level segments. Of the 1,267 delegates who attended the Assembly, 631 were MPs with 615 coming from Member Parliaments and 16 from Associate Member delegations, including 53 Presiding Officers and 36 Deputy Presiding Officers. Member Parliaments' delegations included 224 women MPs (36.4%) and 153 young MPs (24.9%).

10. In continuation of practices established at recent Assemblies, the 149th Assembly was an in-person event with adaptations for hybrid participation. Nearly all the session rooms were equipped for external engagement and remote interpretation and these technical capacities were well used throughout the Assembly. The proceedings of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, Assembly General Debate and all sittings of the Governing Council were live-streamed and recorded 10,000 views.

PART 2

2. THE 149TH ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the Assembly

11. The Assembly was officially opened on 13th October, 2024 by Dr. Tulia Ackson, Speaker of Parliament of Republic of Tanzania and IPU President. In her opening remarks, she welcomed participants to Geneva and stated that from the advent of global humanitarian efforts in the 1860s to the invention of the World Wide Web in 1989, Geneva had always been a melting pot of ideas, cultures and nations. The city continued to foster an environment where science and diplomacy intersect, making it a perfect setting for the Assembly's General debate's theme of "*Harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation for a More Peaceful and Sustainable Future.*"
12. Science, technology, and innovation hold the promise of immense opportunities yet when misused, weaponised, or poorly governed, they also bring to the world threatening perils. Today, the world finds itself at another crossroads in scientific and technological achievements. To cite a few examples, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology are transforming societies at exceptionally fast speeds.
13. Artificial intelligence is revolutionising industries, medicine, and education. Quantum computing promises to solve problems beyond the capabilities of today's most powerful supercomputers. Biotechnological breakthroughs such as gene editing could eradicate previously incurable diseases. Scientific knowledge and expertise also play a critical role in advancing evidence-based policymaking and can help address our biggest challenges: tackling climate change, achieving the sustainable development goals, boosting public scrutiny by amplifying the voice of the people, and resolving long-standing inequalities.
14. The world must also recognize the very real risks associated with innovation. Among these, technological developments may undermine democracy by spreading misinformation or misleading deepfakes. Enhanced surveillance tools have the potential to jeopardise human rights. Socioeconomic disparities may widen if technologies are only available to a select few, or if existing inequalities, such as gender inequality, are perpetuated by the biased data on which plenty of new software is based. Advancements in weapons technologies can seriously undermine global peace and security.
15. Harnessing science, technology and innovation for the greater good means raising and addressing profound ethical, security, and societal questions. Policymakers must come together and have a serious discussion during this Assembly and beyond. They must also act decisively, mainly on three key areas - legislation and regulation; oversight and accountability; and public engagement and education.
16. In legislation and regulation, lawmakers have the power to craft laws that guide technological developments in a responsible manner and protect economies and societies from potential risks. Many parliaments are already taking positive steps in this direction,

like establishing comprehensive regulatory frameworks for emerging tools, such as Artificial Intelligence, enacting data protection laws and legislation that incentivizes sustainable and green innovation, as well as the implementation of laws that promote digital inclusion.

17. In terms of oversight and accountability, parliaments must vigilantly monitor the implementation of technologies and hold both private companies and governments accountable for their actions. For example, parliaments can summon tech executives, experts, and other officials to hearings to address issues like the proliferation of misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms, data breaches, or ethical violations. Through the establishment of specialized committees or commissions, parliaments can also oversee developments in specific technological fields, such as cybersecurity or biotechnology, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations.
18. In terms of public engagement and education, Legislators must foster informed and inclusive societies. This includes funding digital literacy and science education initiatives that will equip citizens with the skills needed to participate in a technology-driven world while remaining fully informed of the risks and benefits. As representatives of the people, lawmakers must also promote inclusive participation in technological development, ensuring that women, youth, people with disabilities, marginalized communities, and under-represented groups can contribute to and benefit from innovation.
19. Technology governance is a collaborative effort that extends beyond the halls of parliament and necessitates partnerships with actors such as governments, civil society, the scientific community, and the private sector, both nationally and internationally. The IPU, as the global organization of national parliaments, embodies this collaborative spirit. The IPU is ready to help parliaments navigate the technological revolution that is currently shaping the world.
20. She urged participants to engage wholeheartedly in these efforts and the general debate, exchange ideas, challenge perspectives and build consensus on actionable strategies to harness science, technology, and innovation for a more peaceful and sustainable future.

(i) Remarks by Mr. M. Chungong, IPU Secretary General

21. He welcomed participants to Geneva for the second Assembly in a row. He agreed with the President that science and technology, if well harnessed and utilized, could help to resolve many of the intractable crises the world was facing. The COVID-19 pandemic had shown that the global community could rise to the challenge and overcome crises, developing and deploying vaccines in record time and adapting to new working methods without hesitation.
22. A highlight of the 149th Assembly would be the launch of the eighth edition of the biennial World e Parliament Report, which reviewed how parliaments were using new technologies to improve their working methods. The report made use of a newly developed Digital Maturity Index to monitor progress and identify opportunities for the IPU's Centre for

Innovation in Parliament to foster cooperation, in order to bridge the digital divide between parliaments at different stages of their digitalization journey.

23. Recently, the IPU had been represented in force at the UN Summit of the Future in New York, and he was pleased to report that the outcome of the Summit, the Pact for the Future, clearly stated the UN's ongoing commitment to work with national parliaments, through the IPU as their global organization. The Pact provided a blueprint for the global community to address the many challenges facing the world and it was a great achievement that the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and inter-parliamentary cooperation had been recognised in that context.
24. Finally, he noted that the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Geneva in July 2025 would provide an opportunity for the leaders of parliaments around the world to rededicate themselves to robust efforts and actions to fulfil the expectations of the people on peace, security and well-being.

(ii) Remarks by Ms. C. López Castro (Mexico), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

25. She congratulated all women parliamentarians who had been elected or re-elected in the many elections that had taken place around the world in 2024. She encouraged delegates to commit to ensuring that women and girls would not be left behind by the rapid evolution of science, technology and innovation and that new technologies would be leveraged to promote equality. Scientific and technological developments had an immense potential to enhance access for women and girls to education, healthcare and other services and could play a vital role in identifying gender biases to promote more equitable outcomes.
26. Parliamentarians needed to redouble their efforts to open up opportunities for women in the frequently male-dominated fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and hold their governments to account for high ethical standards in the development and deployment of new technologies. They also needed to confront the risks, notably in terms of how technology could potentially facilitate gender-based violence, harassment and trafficking. Congratulating the 13 women 4 Inter-Parliamentary Union – 149th Assembly Speakers of Parliament present at the Assembly, she was pleased to announce that the first IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians was now confirmed and would be held in Mexico in February 2025.

(iii) Remarks by Mr. D. Carden, President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians

27. He expressed pleasure that over 25% of the delegates at the Assembly were under the age of 45, which represented huge progress in youth representation at the IPU. With regard to the subject of the General Debate, he noted that it was not the first time that the world had found itself on the precipice of a technological revolution. The industrial revolution in the north of England in the 18th century had drawn people from rural communities to work in

industry and had shattered a centuries-old social equilibrium, pulling workers into squalid urban centres.

28. Under pressure from early labour and trade union movements, governments had gradually intervened to humanize the labour system. The lesson to be drawn was that technological advances had no intrinsic moral character and that their impact depended on whose interests they were made to serve. The world faced a similar test with the rise of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and social media.
29. He encouraged delegates to act decisively to ensure that technology would remain a tool for human progress, serving society's needs rather than dictating its direction. Without such efforts, technological progress would disrupt rather than empower. Parliamentarians needed to ensure that the power of innovation was harnessed for the benefit of all.

(iv) Remarks by Mr. Bertrand Piccard, explorer, psychiatrist and environmentalist

30. Mr. Bertrand the founder of the Solar Impulse Foundation, said that his Foundation had identified 1780 different systems, products, materials, processes, devices and pieces of software that could be used to protect the environment in an efficient and profitable way. Their successful deployment would reduce waste and allow a transition from a quantitative economy focused on producing, consuming and selling more at an ever-cheaper price, to a qualitative economy that would create jobs and profit.
31. Decarbonisation had long been perceived as a handicap for economies, but it was the only logical consequence of the modernisation needed to protect the environment. New energy sources needed to be seen as services for the good of all, with developing countries being given access to existing infrastructure rather than having to develop and build their own. The Solar Impulse Foundation was now working on a new project, Climate Impulse, a prototype hydrogen-powered aeroplane which would fly around the world producing zero emissions.
32. It was a common belief that the decarbonisation of the aviation industry was an impossible dream, but the achievements of many other pioneers and explorers had also seemed impossible until they came to pass. In closing, he expressed his view that the prevalence of eco-anxiety and eco-depression was due to a lack of action and invited parliamentarians to be the “explorers of the 21st century” and put in place the legal frameworks, incentives and subsidies necessary for the beneficial solutions he had outlined to succeed.

2. Emergency items

33. On 15th October 2024, the Assembly considered the following six agenda items submitted by members for selection for debate as emergency items:
 - a) Call for condemnation of the missile attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran against Israel submitted by Israel;

- b) Enforcing UN General Assembly resolution ES-10/24 and ensuring accountability submitted by Palestine on behalf of the Arab Group;
- c) Response by parliamentarians to the urgent plea by the UN Secretary-General to recommit to multilateralism for global peace, justice and sustainability submitted by France, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands and Canada) Inter-Parliamentary Union;
- d) The security and humanitarian situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo submitted by the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- e) Mobilizing parliamentarians for the protection of children in armed conflicts to avoid risks, suffering and consequences submitted by Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana; and
- f) The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and Lebanon submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

34. All the six proposals were presented to the Assembly by the respective sponsors. Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran withdrew their proposals on the floor. The Assembly then proceeded with a roll-call vote on the four remaining items. Two joint proposals received the required two-thirds majority of the vote that it the proposal from France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands and Canada as well as the proposal from Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana. In accordance with Rule 11.2 (b) of the Assembly, the former proposal, which received the largest number of positive votes was adopted and added to the agenda as Item 9.

3. Debates and decisions of the Assembly and Standing Committees

General debate

Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future

35. During the three days of deliberations, 143 legislators from 113 MPs including 40 Presiding Officers and 16 young parliamentarians, as well as representatives of eight Associate Members and six permanent observers, contributed to the General Debate. The proceedings of the Debate were webcast, and many of the good practices and recommendations that emerged were reflected in the outcome document.
36. Arising from the deliberations, the Assembly resolved as follows:
- a) From the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and the urgent need to combat climate change, to the persistent digital divide and the ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies, the multifaceted opportunities, challenges and risks the world face underscore the need for parliaments to take urgent collective and forward-looking action, informed by common ethical standards regarding science technology and innovation development and governance.

- b) The challenges the world face demand a shared global commitment to leveraging STI for the common good and it's a high time some countries should make bold decisions to pre-emptively ban certain inhumane technologically advanced weapons;
- c) The Assembly recognises the potential of STI, when guided by ethical principles and inclusive governance, as a powerful means for building trust, promoting cooperation, bridging divides and enhancing the contribution of parliaments and parliamentarians to build a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable world. The Assembly welcomes the work of the IPU to foster dialogue and cooperation on issues related to STI and commits to continue and expand these efforts.
- d) While noting with satisfaction that the themes of science, technology and innovation permeate the important commitments adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024, namely the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations, the IPU is committed to working closely with the executive branches of governments, the United Nations system and civil society on implementing these commitments.
- e) As representatives of the people, parliamentarians are keenly aware of their responsibility to ensure that the benefits of STI reach all segments of society, to bridge the technological divide between and within nations, communities, genders and generations and to find consensus on how to overcome the challenges posed by rapid technological change;
- f) IPU recognizes that parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to develop and implement ethical frameworks for STI governance, ensuring that scientific and technological progress aligns with human rights standards and societal values and contributes to the well-being of all.
- g) Parliaments must address the complex challenges of an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world, leveraging strategic foresight to anticipate future trends, opportunities and risks. Parliaments have an important role to set legal boundaries, establish accountability mechanisms and prevent uses of technology that lead to human rights violations, exacerbate inequalities or undermine the rule of law and democratic processes;
- h) Parliamentarians should pay particular attention to the situation of women, youth and groups in vulnerable or marginalized situations who risk being left behind in the digital age and recognize the vital role they can and should play in shaping the future of STI. Parliamentary action is crucial in empowering all sections of society to participate in and benefit from technological advancements.
- i) Parliaments must address the specific needs of these groups by embracing inclusive technological solutions that simultaneously preserve dignity, uphold rights, reduce

exposure to digital risks and provide the conditions for them to realize their socioeconomic potential.

- j) IPU commits to fostering the more substantial involvement of women and youth in STI, including in education, public health, research, innovation and technology governance, and to the effective implementation of gender-responsive and youth-inclusive STI policies by ensuring that technological development processes integrate diverse perspectives and guarantee the equal and meaningful participation of all segments of society;
- k) IPU reiterates its commitment to evidence-based and efficient policymaking and to fostering a culture of scientific inquiry and innovation. IPU urges all States to invest in research and development, promote international science diplomacy and adhere to global standards for responsible innovation. IPU further advocates for increased recourse to scientific expertise in parliamentary decision-making processes as an essential mechanism for addressing complex global challenges.
- l) IPU recognises the close link between STI, peace and development. The ethical and inclusive application of STI is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, building resilient societies and strengthening accountability. Conversely, the misuse of or unequal access to technology can exacerbate existing inequalities and conflicts, or risk creating new ones.
- m) IPU's focus should be on harnessing STI to tackle the underlying causes of global challenges, which are often rooted in socioeconomic exclusion, inequality, discrimination, lack of access to education and environmental degradation. The Union should increase focus on leveraging technology to enhance human security, which encompasses citizens' protection by addressing essential needs such as food security, health care, education and shelter.
- n) Parliaments must monitor the potential risks and challenges posed by emerging technologies and take necessary and pre-emptive action to mitigate negative impacts, foster responsible innovation and ensure compliance with international standards and ethical principles. In this vein, the Assembly notes the importance of ethical AI development, cybersecurity and digital privacy protection to ensure the peaceful use of technology that is grounded in human rights.
- o) IPU commits to ensuring a safe online environment to prevent harassment, bullying and cybercrime, particularly when they are gender-based. Particular attention must be paid to addressing, through regulation and targeted policy, the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and AI-generated content that propagates hate speech, as these can undermine public trust and threaten social cohesion.
- p) The Assembly commits to inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation on STI issues and emphasizes the IPU's unique role in fostering global parliamentary cooperation on STI governance. The Assembly welcomes the adoption of the IPU

Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology and IPU resolution on *the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law*. It further acknowledges the reports, recommendations and guidelines on digital transformation and AI that have been developed through the IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliament, including the World e-Parliament Report 2024. IPU commits to work for the implementation of these new standards.

- q) The Assembly committed to lead the way towards a more equitable, sustainable and technologically advanced world, pursuing informed, inclusive and innovative approaches to STI governance. It further pledged to individually and collectively harness the power of science, technology and innovation for the benefit of all humanity and the preservation of the world.

4. Standing Committees meetings

(i) Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

- 37. The Committee held its sittings on 14th and 16th October 2024. Ms. A. Kuspan of Kazakhstan, President of the Committee, was unable to attend the meeting. The Vice-President, Mr M. Rezakhah of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was no longer a MP. In this regard, Bureau member Ms. F. Belhirsch of Netherlands chaired the 14th October sitting while Mr. L. Wehrli of Switzerland chaired the 16th October sitting.
- 38. At its first sitting on 14th October 2024, the Committee held two consecutive panel discussions. The first focused on the *role of parliamentarians in preventing conflicts over natural resources*. After interventions from a panel of experts, the Committee discussed the growing importance of economic motivations in conflicts and highlighted that climate change was amplifying those tensions. They also stressed that sound legislative frameworks were essential to ensure equitable management of resources such as water, fertile land and minerals, including uranium, and for effective conflict prevention.
- 39. Fourteen delegates took the floor to emphasize the importance of democratic processes, equitable access and international cooperation to prevent conflicts over natural resources. Key points included the need for sustainable lifestyles, technological advancements like recycling, and the role of parliamentarians in fostering dialogue. Proposals were made for climate action committees and for enhancing women's roles in resource management. The transformative potential of science in peacebuilding was highlighted, along with a call for collective action, local community involvement, and addressing the geopolitical issues surrounding nuclear energy.
- 40. The second panel discussion of the day addressed *the role of parliamentarians in nuclear security*. The panel brought together experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and was moderated by the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP). The experts highlighted the critical role of parliamentarians in creating legislation to protect against the misuse of nuclear materials.

41. While the public often associates "nuclear" with weapons, the discussion emphasized the peaceful applications of nuclear technology in healthcare and agriculture and the need for parliamentarians to raise awareness of these benefits while safeguarding against risks. International cooperation and the ratification of key treaties were central themes with delegates taking the floor to call for better legal frameworks and stronger collaboration.
42. Law enforcement coordination and public engagement were also stressed as necessary components for comprehensive nuclear security. The session concluded with a call for collective action to enhance nuclear security as a shared global responsibility.
43. At its sitting on 16th October 2024, the Committee held an expert hearing on *the role of parliaments in advancing a two-state solution in Palestine*. The event started with a video of two peace activists, both heading Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations and working together in the field. Two experts and three co-rapporteurs shared their views on the topic. Sixteen members took the floor, highlighting the need for a comprehensive, inclusive IPU resolution urging a two-state solution to end the conflict and ensure security and equality for both Israelis and Palestinians.
44. During the discussion, various proposals were made to promote peace and stability in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including ending Israeli settlement expansion, legitimizing the Palestinian Authority and fostering inter-parliamentary cooperation. The importance of international law and the role of parliaments in advancing peace were highlighted, alongside calls for recognizing Palestine as a State and emphasizing women's roles in peacebuilding.
45. Although differing views were expressed on the two-state solution, most of them advocated for a peaceful and democratic negotiated settlement. As one party directly concerned by the hearing was unable to attend, a declaration from that delegation was made available and will be part of the summary records.
46. The Committee elected Mr. H. Bin Mohammad of Malaysia as Vice-President to complete the term of the Asia-Pacific Group until October 2025.

(ii) Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

47. The Committee met on 15th and 16th October 2024. Mr. W. William of Seychelles, President of the Standing Committee chaired the sessions. 50 delegations attended the meetings. The Committee held three-panel discussions featuring experts from the United Nations system and think tanks.
48. The first panel featured a debate entitled Parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-lasting impact of conflicts, including armed conflicts on sustainable development which corresponds to the title of the resolution that will be presented to the Committee at its next session in April 2025. The second panel discussion presented the draft outcome document of the Parliamentary Meeting that will take place in Azerbaijan at the 2024 United Nations

Climate Change Conference (COP29) which is entrusted with the follow-up to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

49. The third panel discussion focused on the role of parliaments in preventing corporate tax avoidance and achieving sustainable development. The panel stressed the vital role of parliamentarians from mobilizing domestic resources to partnering with tax authorities and educating citizens on the importance of taxes for public services and sustainable development.
50. At the end of the Committee session, elections were held to fill positions on the Committee's Bureau. The Committee also approved its work plan for the next Assembly.

(iii) Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

51. The Committee held three sittings, on 14th, 15th and 16th October 2024 with the Vice-President of the Standing Committee, Mr A. Torosyan of Armenia, chairing meetings in the absence of the substantive chairperson. The Committee considered the draft resolution, *The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law*, introduced by the co-Rapporteurs, Ms. M. Rempel Garner of Canada and Ms. N. Lugangira of United Republic of Tanzania, the latter via remote participation.
52. When examining the draft resolution, the Committee considered 194 amendments submitted by 26 parliaments namely, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lithuania, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, South Africa, South Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates. Three amendments were proposed by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.
53. The co-rapporteurs presented the revised draft resolution to the Committee at its final sitting on 16th October 2024. The draft resolution was adopted by acclamation. The Bureau met on the morning of 16th October 2024. It considered proposals for the Committee's future work programme. It gave close consideration to a proposal supported by Switzerland. Ultimately, the Bureau decided to recommend the proposal put forward by Belgium on supporting the victims of illegal international adoption and stopping this practice.
54. The Committee approved the proposal to prepare a resolution entitled *Recognizing and supporting the victims of illegal international adoption and taking measures to prevent this practice*. It also approved the nomination of Ms. L. Crexell of Argentina and Mr. M. De Maegd of Belgium as co-Rapporteurs. Following consultations among the Bureau members, the Assembly additionally approved the nomination of Mr. S. Patra of India as a third co-Rapporteur. A preparatory debate would take place at the 150th Assembly in April 2025 and a resolution would be finalized at the 151st Assembly in October 2025.
55. The Committee approved the Bureau's recommendation to hold debates at the 150th Assembly in April 2025 in follow-up to two recent resolutions:

- a) Orphanage trafficking action plan: Implementing the resolution adopted by the 147th Assembly in October 2023; and
- b) Follow-up on implementation of the resolution on artificial intelligence from the current Assembly

(iv) Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

56. The Committee held two sittings on 15th and 16th October 2024 with Mr. D. McGuinty of Canada, President of the Committee chairing the sittings. The agenda consisted of two in-depth panel discussions and two shorter segments. About thirty delegations participated in the two sittings. The first panel discussion, *Financing the United Nations system: A critical perspective, featured presentations* by Mr P. Linnér, Programme Director, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation; Ms. S. Gruener, Deputy Director, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Mr. B. Christiaens, Portfolio Manager, UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. The second panel, *The United Nations and the G20: Complementarity or redundancy?*, featured presentations from Mr. B. Ellmers, Director of Global Policy Forum's Financing for Sustainable Development Program who participated online from Berlin and Ms. L. Crexell of Argentina, Vice-President of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs as a respondent.
57. One short segment, titled *United Nations treaties: A review of ratifications and entry into force*, featured Ms. C.M. Régimbal, Chief, UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (Geneva) and Deputy Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament and Mr. A. Motter, Senior Advisor, Economic and Social Affairs, IPU. The Committee President led the final segment which took stock of parliamentary action to advance the Committee's first two motions, one on gender equality in the UN General Assembly and the other on Security Council reform.

(v) Debate on the emergency item Response by parliamentarians to the urgent plea by the UN Secretary-General to recommit to recommit to multilateralism for global peace, justice and sustainability

58. The emergency item debate request was submitted by the delegations of France, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Canada. The item was debated in the morning of 16th October 2024 with IPU President Dr. T. Ackson as Chairperson. Five speakers took the floor during the debate, namely Ukraine, Thailand, the Russian Federation, Finland and the United Kingdom.
59. Delegates expressed concern over multiple crises, conflicts and wars in the world referring to the situation in Sudan, Gaza and the Middle East, Myanmar and Ukraine, among others. A woman delegate deplored the devastating situation where mothers are giving birth under missile showers. She expressed regret that technology was being developed not to prolong human life but to end it as quickly as possible. Several delegates also called for the reform of the UN Security Council which has been paralyzed by the vetoes of permanent members.

60. A few delegates stated that the Security Council should be expanded to include members from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, India and Japan. Another delegate added that the IPU should have clear rules for advancing peace. A delegate underlined the critical importance of multilateralism and the need for genuine dialogue to reach peaceful solutions to the situations in Ukraine, the Middle East and Myanmar. Another delegate stated that the emergency item proposal was not referring to recent events, as required by Rule 11 of the Rules of the Assembly. He also criticised the procedure for emergency items, in particular, that proposals were submitted just one or two days before voting, leaving delegations without enough time to read the resolution.
61. In response, the IPU President said that amendments to the IPU Statutes were under discussion to address various concerns. The delegate also said that the emergency item proposal included several statements by the UN Secretary-General which were not accurately presented. He added that his delegation would not be able to support the resolution as it stood. A delegate from the United Kingdom, one of the co-authors of the proposal, underscored that parliamentarians had a moral obligation to promote peace, support diplomatic efforts for de-escalation and ensure humanitarian aid reached those in need. She emphasized that it was the duty of parliamentarians to prioritize initiatives that allow children not just to survive, but to thrive. She concluded her speech with a call to work hand in hand for humanity.
62. The Assembly referred the emergency item to a drafting committee made up of representatives of Argentina, Australia, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chad, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Mexico, Palestine and the Russian Federation.

(vi) Special segment to mark the 10th anniversary of the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments

63. On 15th October 2024, a special segment took place in the Assembly to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the Common Principles. During this celebratory event, the IPU President praised the impact of the Common Principles over the last 10 years. The IPU Secretary General subsequently presented IPU products that had been created throughout the year to celebrate the principles and launched a new publication to mark the anniversary titled *Celebrating 10 years of the Common Principles for Support to Parliament: Why they are important and how they have been used*.
64. The Assembly heard testimonies from the National Assemblies of Zambia and France on the value of the principles in their respective parliaments. The segment concluded with a call to action by the IPU President for those remaining parliaments that had not yet endorsed the Common Principles to do so.

(vii) Special segment to mark the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

65. The general Debate included a special segment on 15th October 2024 to mark the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).

This segment featured the participation of His Royal Highness Prince Mired Bin Raad Al-Hussein of Jordan, the Special Envoy on the Universalization of the APMBC. Addressing the Assembly, Prince Mired recalled how, 20 years previously, he had engaged on this issue by fighting the devastating impact of anti-personnel mines on individuals, families and communities. Since 2004, as the Chair of Jordan's National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation, he had been leading Jordan's efforts to comply with the provisions under the APMBC towards a mine free Jordan. In 2012, the country had officially declared that it had concluded its full mine clearance, after having cleared more than 200,000 landmines.

66. Prince Mired also expanded on the reasons why parliamentarians should engage with the Convention and why efforts towards a mine-free world mattered in the context of their functions as members of parliament. He called on the parliamentary community to make room for the landmine issue as it directly related to safeguarding human life, ensuring human dignity, and exercising good governance. Regarding universalization of the Convention, so far 164 countries had acceded, but 33 remained outside the APMBC. Accession was the goal both for affected countries and for those that were already free of mines. However, accession could not be achieved without a concerted plan of action that was well coordinated among all stakeholders, including parliamentarians.
67. Member Parliament delegations intervened to state their support for the cause of eliminating landmines and for the efforts towards further universalisation of the Convention. A delegate from Canada recalled that Canadian parliamentarians had frequently raised awareness on issues of anti-personnel mines at IPU Assemblies, and highlighted parliamentary efforts to ratify the Convention, also known as the "Ottawa Treaty" as a great example of the role that parliamentarians could play in addressing global challenges.
68. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga shed light on the challenges faced by Pacific Island States due to unexploded mines following World War II. He committed to table the issue of Tonga's accession to the Convention at the next sitting of the Legislative Assembly in November 2024 and pledged his country's support for the APMBC.
69. Additional celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Convention at the Assembly included the organization of an open session of the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law on armed conflict and disability. MPs attending the Assembly were also invited to express their support with a group photo under the Broken Chair sculpture in front of the Palais des Nations.

(viii) 2024 Cremer-Passy Prize

70. The award of the 2024 Cremer-Passy Prize took place on 16th October 2024 at a special ceremony during the Assembly. The IPU President announced the winner as Dr. Haroun Kabadi, the former President of the National Assembly of Chad from 2011 to 2021 and currently speaker of Chad's National Transitional Council, which is playing the role of legislative body as the country returns to constitutional order. The award was made in recognition of his exceptional work in promoting peace and security.

71. The IPU President announced that the Prize Selection Board, made up of former Presidents of the IPU and prominent MPs representing each geopolitical group, had met four times to deliberate on the candidates. The Board had been unanimous in its decision to award the prize to Dr. Kabadi. As Dr. Kabadi was not able to attend the Assembly in person, the Chadian delegation accepted the trophy on his behalf. Member of the delegation Mr. J. Laouhingamaye Dingaomaibe took the floor to say a few words of thanks and to pay tribute to Dr. Kabadi.

(ix) Special segment on the latest IPU publications

72. On 16th October 2024, the Secretary General presented some of the most recent IPU publications to the Assembly: *Human security and common security to build peace*, a new toolkit designed to equip parliamentarians worldwide with innovative approaches to address conflict and promote peace, in line with the IPU priority theme for 2024. The Secretary-General also presented the World e-Parliament Report 2024, the eighth edition of the biennial IPU report produced by the IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliament. *10 actions for stronger national climate commitments: A guide to help parliaments and parliamentarians enhance their oversight of national climate commitments known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*.
73. The new guide is a sister product to another IPU guide, *10 actions for greener parliaments* (and those who work in them), published last year, which encourages parliaments to reduce their carbon footprint. Both guides are part of the IPU's climate campaign *Parliaments for the planet*, designed to mobilise parliaments to accelerate action on the climate emergency.

(x) Special accountability segment

74. As in previous Assemblies, the general debate included a special accountability segment chaired by the IPU President, in which delegations were invited to contribute with interventions on their actions to implement IPU outcomes. The President conveyed the importance of translating IPU decisions into national policies and underscored the duty of delegates to submit IPU resolutions to their parliaments, stimulate their implementation and report results obtained to the IPU Secretariat. To facilitate this process, each year, a number of parliaments from each geopolitical group were designated to report by answering a survey prepared by the IPU Secretariat.
75. Ms. A. Filip, IPU Director of the Division for Member Parliaments and External Relations, presented the 2024 annual Members' reporting exercise. The rate of response to the 2024 survey had reached a high of 81%. The survey highlighted that 76% of respondents were relaying IPU Assembly outcomes to their parliaments with nearly half taking additional steps such as revising legislation or engaging in parliamentary debates.
76. Good practices from IPU Member Parliaments such as Australia, Burundi, Mexico, Pakistan and the Philippines were shared with the plenary. The IPU Secretary General took the floor to make a special tribute to Mr. P. Katjavivi, Speaker of the Namibian Parliament for his longstanding contribution to the IPU as he was set to retire in 2025. Mr. P. Katjavivi

then spoke of his dedication to youth engagement, emphasising the role of Namibia's Children's Parliament as a catalyst for legislative change and in holding parliamentarians accountable to younger generations.

77. Two members of the Namibian Children's Parliament, Ms. P. Mokotjomela and Mr. G. Neumbo, took the floor and highlighted the ability of this body to shape the country's future by taking youth interests into account, including those related to childcare and gender equality. A total of 18 delegations then took the floor to share their parliaments' good practices in following up on recent IPU decisions.
78. Examples of parliamentary action under this segment included Canada where following the adoption of the Manama Declaration, the Canadian Human Rights Commission had conducted a study on racism, sexism and systemic discrimination in the public service. To make Parliament more inclusive and to strengthen citizen engagement, a multi-language translation system had been implemented in Fiji. India had hosted the P20 Summit in 2023, reaffirming its commitment to parliamentary diplomacy as a means to promote peace and prosperity. Following the Derna flash flood of 2023, Libya Parliament had established a Libyan Development and Reconstruction Fund to facilitate the city's reconstruction.
79. Malawi Parliament had strengthened its oversight abilities to ensure that the Peace and Unity Act passed in 2022 was fully enforced and to assess its implementation. In June 2024, a new Data Protection Act had been adopted and aimed to provide a comprehensive regulatory framework around personal data. Mexico had been actively working on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by setting up a multi-party group to ensure every initiative undertaken contributed to reaching the SDG targets. In Surinam, electoral reforms had been undertaken to ensure fair representation of various minorities within Parliament. Suriname had also initiated programmes focused on community development and education to empower local populations.
80. Thailand Parliament had actively addressed the issue of cyber scams and passed a new law on cybercrime prevention in March 2023. This law tackled the fast-moving nature of cybercrimes by facilitating cooperation between financial institutions, telecom operators and the authorities. Tunisia was the 70th to accede to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime thanks to measures taken by Parliament. Two additional protocols to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime had also been adopted, enabling Tunisia to deal with a variety of cyber threats.
81. Uzbekistan Parliament had established a parliamentary commission on the SDGs to exercise effective parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Other delegations that took the floor during this segment included Australia, Bahrain, Benin, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Maldives and Morocco.

(xi) Adjournment of the 149th Assembly

82. The 149th Assembly sitting adjourned on 17th October 2024, the IPU President introduced the Geneva Declaration on Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) for a more

- peaceful and sustainable future and invited two young parliamentarians, Ms. M. Al Suwaidi of United Arab Emirates and Mr. D. Carden of the United Kingdom to present the Declaration. A request from Ireland for the addition of a sentence on worldwide collaboration and exchange was noted. The Assembly unanimously endorsed the Geneva Declaration.
83. Mr. C.A. Rendón García (Mexico), rapporteur of the drafting committee, introduced the emergency item resolution, *Response by parliamentarians to the urgent plea by the UN Secretary-General to recommit to multilateralism for global peace, justice and sustainability*. The delegations from Argentina, Palestine and the Russian Federation took the floor to express reservations about the emergency item process but confirmed their endorsement of the final resolution. The Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution.
 84. Ms. M. Rempel Garner of Canada and Ms. N. Lugangira of United Republic of Tanzania, co-Rapporteurs of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, presented the resolution *The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law*. The Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution. The Assembly took note of the Reports of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, presented by its Acting President, Mr. L. Wehrli of Switzerland and the report of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, presented by its President, Mr. W. William of Seychelles as well as the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, presented by its President, Mr. D. McGuinty.
 85. The Assembly approved the appointment of four additional co-rapporteurs for the resolution to be drafted by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security for adoption at the 150th Assembly on the *role of parliaments in advancing the two-state solution in Palestine*, bringing the total number of rapporteurs to six, one for each geopolitical group. The Assembly approved the subject item for the resolution to be drafted by the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights for adoption at the 151st Assembly, together with the rapporteurs that would be working on the draft resolution.
 86. The Assembly unanimously adopted amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules of the Assembly, with the effect of lowering the age below which members of parliaments would be considered “young” in the IPU context, fixing several inconsistencies, removing certain redundant practices and enshrining new ones. At the conclusion of the Assembly, the representatives of the geopolitical groups took the floor: Mr. H. Mahjoub (Tunisia) on behalf of the Arab Group, Mr. Zhang Yong (China) on behalf of the Asia Pacific Group, Ms. M.d.C. Alva Prieto (Peru) on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr. K.K.P. Kouassi (Côte d’Ivoire) on behalf of the African Group, and Mr. L. Wehrli (Switzerland) on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group.
 87. They thanked the President, the Secretary-General, the staff of the Secretariat, the support staff, including the interpreters, and the Swiss hosts for the smooth running of the Assembly. They congratulated the participants for their passionate, inspiring and constructive interventions, which had highlighted much common ground among the international parliamentary community. They expressed satisfaction with the unanimous adoption of an

emergency item resolution after the failure of the two previous Assemblies to do so, but regretted that the conflict in the Middle East, as well as conflicts in other parts of the world, had not received the specific attention they deserved. They encouraged parliamentarians to continue their work to promote the values of the IPU and wished participants a safe trip home.

88. In his concluding remarks, Mr. M. Chungong, IPU Secretary General, said that he was confident that the appeal he had made at the start of the Assembly for parliamentarians to be resilient and not yield to despair in the face of a multiplicity of global challenges had been heeded. He paid tribute to the IPU President, who had done a sterling job presiding over the Assembly and thanked the unsung heroes - the IPU Secretariat, the support staff and the interpreters who had made the Assembly possible. In listening to the General Debate, he had been convinced that, if harnessed and regulated properly, science, technology and innovation could be deployed for the good of humanity, including in the resolution of conflicts. He was pleased that the IPU membership had rededicated itself to multilateralism, inspired by the recent pronouncements of the UN Secretary-General. Finally, he was glad that the Parliament of Jamaica had rejoined the Organization and that there were good prospects of other new Members joining in the near future.
89. In her concluding remarks, Dr. T. Ackson, IPU President and President of the 149th Assembly, observed that at times, the atmosphere at the Assembly had been tense and polarized. The emergency item resolution had echoed the words of the UN Secretary-General that the world had become paralysed by dysfunction and held hostage to geopolitical tensions. Nonetheless, the Assembly had identified many solutions, notably the need for: a reinvigorated multilateral system, better respect for international law, a rejection of violence and suffering, increased global cooperation, and most importantly, dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy.
90. The Assembly had also seen a lively General Debate that had concluded that science, technology and innovation offered great hope for a more peaceful and sustainable future; a robust appeal from the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law for the membership to put pressure on the countries in the Middle East to avert full-scale war; a strong resolution on artificial intelligence and how it might impact democracy, human rights and the rule of law; and the approval of amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules as part of ongoing work to modernize the Organization's operations. She encouraged those present to continue to uphold the values of the IPU – democracy, equality, respect, inclusivity and dignity for all – and looked forward to seeing them again in Uzbekistan in April 2025. Dr. T. Ackson declared the 149th IPU Assembly closed and the IPU Anthem was played.

PART 3

3. THE 214TH SESSION OF THE IPU'S GOVERNING COUNCIL

1. Report of the IPU President

91. The Governing Council received a detailed report on the activities of the IPU President over the period since the last Assembly. These activities in the form of working visits and online contributions, were focused on achieving eight aims, namely: supporting conflict affected regions; engaging in diplomatic efforts in the Middle East; enhancing parliamentary innovation; promoting youth and gender participation; fostering global parliamentary diplomacy and upholding IPU values; addressing urgent global issues; strengthening parliamentary cooperation; and driving initiatives on digital transformation and artificial intelligence.
92. The President informed the Governing Council that following a request from the Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine for her to engage with the executive authorities of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, she had met with President Putin on the sidelines of the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates (BRICS) Parliamentary Forum in St. Petersburg in July, 2024. She stressed that she intended to provide a full report on this meeting once she is able to meet President Zelensky in Ukraine.
93. The President took advantage of her visit to Hungary for the celebration of the 135th anniversary of its Parliament's membership of the IPU to make a plea in favour of increased gender inclusivity, as Hungary is one of the countries where the representation of women in parliament is below the global average. The President's participation in the 79th United Nations General Assembly had offered her an opportunity to reinforce the IPU's engagement with the United Nations, an essential partner of the IPU in reaching its core objectives.
94. The President took advantage of her participation in the G7 Speakers' Meeting held in Verona, Italy to share the IPU's perspective on the current debate on digital transformation and artificial intelligence, one of the key issues of our time. She also took that opportunity to meet with the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, who had expressed an interest in possible IPU membership.
95. The Governing Council expressed its thanks to the President for her commitment to raising the Organization's profile. Some delegates raised concerns about the President's meeting with President Putin and requested further details of her discussions with him. Replying to these concerns, the President reiterated that her visit to the Russian Federation was organised in accordance with the request from the Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine that she engage with the executives of both countries party to the conflict. She highlighted that the initial plan had been for her to travel to both Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the same trip, and she had written to the respective Speakers of Parliament to that effect.

96. Her visit to Ukraine could not be scheduled at the proposed time due to the participation of President Zelensky and the Speaker of the Parliament of Ukraine in a NATO summit. She had not felt in a position to cancel her mission to the Russian Federation as she had been invited to take part in the BRICS Parliamentary Forum in St. Petersburg. She reiterated that her visit to the Russian Federation was to be understood in the context of the IPU's core objective to promote dialogue through parliamentary diplomacy. She encouraged delegates to give her due credit for her efforts and to demonstrate the same trust they had placed in her when they had elected her as President of the IPU.
97. Expressing her hope that her explanations had put the matter to rest, she reiterated her commitment to reporting back to the Council after completing a meeting with President Zelensky.

2. The Secretary-General's report

98. The report was an overview of activities undertaken since January 2024 to implement the 2022-2026 IPU Strategy. A full annual report on 2024, including an assessment of impact would be submitted during the first Assembly of 2025 as is customary.

(i) IPU Strategy for 2022-2026

99. The Strategy adopted at the end of 2021 clearly identifies five strategic objectives towards which the IPU is working. These objectives aim at building parliamentary ecosystems for democracy, for everyone, that will facilitate progress in the four policy areas of climate change, democracy, human rights, gender and youth empowerment, peace and security and sustainable development for all.
100. Over the past 9 months, the IPU organised 30 national support activities in 16 countries to build the capacity of parliaments institutionally and on key thematic issues. The Union organised 54 regional and global events to mobilise and leverage parliamentary action and facilitate learning.
101. With regard to the refreshed Communications Strategy which was approved in 2022, implementation was generally on track with most indicators showing progress. Five (5) highlights of 2024 to date include:
- a) Investment in new forms of digital content, such as video and showcasing good parliamentary practice had led to the following:
 - 15% in website traffic in August 2024 compared with the same period last year
 - 67% increase in YouTube views
 - 50% increase in Instagram followers
 - b) A critical success factor of the Communications Strategy is the Union's ability to reach out directly to the 46,000 MPs around the world. The Union has since obtained over

30,000 contacts for its database, many of whom are sitting MPs and has also been able to launch the first annual MP perceptions poll;

- c) To reflect a more fragmented information landscape, the Union was experimenting with new forms of content and new channels to reach MPs. For example, in 2024, the Union launched a new podcast series called IPU on air and was in the process of creating more social media content, including micro-content such as Graphic Interchange Formats (GIFs) or data visualizations, which perform well. The Union was also experimenting with in-depth, contextual content such as the new IPU series IPU long reads;
- d) Engagement with traditional media is also bearing fruit. The Union had recorded +5% increased media coverage of 19,476 articles in 2024 compared to 18,535 articles in 2023. Top tier coverage includes The Guardian, the Hindustan Times, Le Monde. In just one week, the Union was mentioned twice in the Washington Post on matters youth and gender equality; and
- e) As part of the IPU's digital transformation, the Union is reinforcing cyber-security on all platforms and training staff accordingly. The Union was also maximising the benefits of SharePoint by creating intranet sites.

(ii) Activities carried out under Strategic Objective 1

- 102. Under this objective, IPU aims at building effective and empowered parliaments that are able to work autonomously and efficiently. Its action under this strategic objective focuses on:
 - a) Defending the rights of men and women MPs to work freely, without intimidation and violence;
 - b) Building the capacity of parliaments and expertise of MPs and administrations on their institutional mandate as well as on specific policy issues; and
 - c) Providing access to tools, research and good practices and building standards to assist parliaments in their work.
- 103. Over the past nine months, the Union has continued its work to defend the rights of MPs. The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians is currently considering the cases of a total of 769 MPs from 49 countries. The most common violation reported to the Committee was undue invalidation, revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate. The Committee organised several trial observation missions in Eswatini in 2024 with regard to one of its cases.
- 104. With regard to violence against women in parliament, the IPU, in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), has pursued a research project on violence against women in parliament in the Asia-Pacific region. This is to complement the regional research previously carried out in Europe and Africa, as well as the global research led by the IPU. The Union organized capacity building activities in 12 countries. This included outreach visits and public

engagement in Djibouti; budget and bill costing in Sierra Leone; gender equality in Djibouti, Sierra Leone and Namibia; human rights assessment in Mongolia; public engagement and outreach in Vanuatu; and engagement on human rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in Central African Republic. IPU is in the process of signing agreements with the Parliaments of Benin, Chad, Lesotho, Somalia and Vanuatu for consistent and better-targeted technical assistance to be provided to them.

105. The Union is focused on providing support to transitional parliaments in West and Central Africa. Further to the missions carried out by the IPU Secretary General in 2023 and 2024 to Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali, the Union facilitated a roundtable dinner for Speakers and delegations of transitional parliaments from West and Central Africa to exchange experiences, strategise together and identify support needs. IPU organized support activities related to constitution making as well as peace building and inclusive decision making on Burkina Faso and Gabon. Other activities may be undertaken in Chad and Guinea.
106. In terms of thematic capacity-building, IPU provided support to parliamentarians and parliamentary administration staff on strengthening committee work, parliamentary diplomacy, ICT in parliament, human rights, gender equality and gender-based discrimination, equal care, health and climate.
107. With regard to standards setting and research, the parliamentary indicators relating to Sustainable Development Goals 16.6 and 16.7 on effective institutions were launched as the Indicators for Democratic Parliaments. These serve as a comprehensive self-assessment tool designed to help parliaments evaluate their capacity and practices against established democratic standards. They are suitable for all parliaments, regardless of their political system or stage of development.
108. Furthermore, throughout the year, IPU continued to raise awareness and engage Member Parliaments around the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments, which celebrate their 10th anniversary in 2024. A new series of awareness-raising activities regarding accountability and partnership with State Audit Institutions was launched, in cooperation with the INTOSAI Development Initiative. The objective was to build the capacity of parliaments to engage with such organizations and make use of the data and evidence provided in parliamentary work.

(iii) Activities carried out under Strategic Objective 2

109. Being inclusive and representative is the other pre-requisite for strong parliaments. For the IPU, this means working to:
 - a) Provide support to parliaments to transform into gender-sensitive institutions
 - b) Build the capacity of women and young parliamentarians
 - c) Engage in research on the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations

110. In recent months, IPU has supported parliaments in transforming into gender sensitive institutions. The Union is currently supporting Colombia, Djibouti and Mongolia parliaments in assessing or enhancing their gender sensitivity. The Union is also implementing projects of support, including focusing on building the capacity of women's caucuses or gender committees in Djibouti, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Türkiye.
111. IPU pursued efforts to support more women in parliament. The Women in Parliament in 2023 report, launched in 2024, showed slow progress around the world, which is a source of concern. IPU organised workshops in Burkina Faso, Namibia and Türkiye to support efforts for more women in Parliament.
112. IPU's work on youth in parliament in terms of data collection, awareness raising activities and capacity-building, has gained traction. The Union has more data on youth in parliament than ever and it continues to be cited in scholarly journals, media outlets and the official UN Indicators for the sustainable development goals.
113. IPU pursued the agenda for the empowerment of young MPs with the organisation of the youth empowerment webinar series, which focused on various issues, including the role of young MPs in contributing to conflict prevention and peacebuilding and on young women's political participation. The latter briefing took place on 13th August 2024 to mark International Youth Day.
114. IPU also facilitated Capacity-building support to young parliamentarians. The Union organised a workshop to support the creation of a Network of Young Parliamentarians for the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw of Myanmar. The Union organised a two-day training course on leadership, mentorship and communication for young MPs of the National Assembly of Zambia and the Zambia Youth Parliamentary Caucus in Lusaka. The Union also organized a workshop for MPs of the Transitional Legislative Assembly of Burkina Faso in August 2024 which included components on youth political participation and UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security.
115. IPU has continued with the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign including a social media push on International Youth Day. Close to 1,700 changemakers have already signed up, including over 750 MPs and over 60 Speakers of Parliament.
116. The Tenth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians was held in Yerevan, Armenia from 12th to 14th September 2024. It was attended by almost 150 young MPs from over 50 countries. Addressing the theme *Avoiding lost generations: Preserving education and employment in all circumstances*, the young parliamentarians affirmed their commitment to preserving education and employment opportunities in all circumstances, including in times of crisis.
117. Building on the conclusions of the 2022 Global Parliamentary Report on public engagement, the IPU has continued to organize bimonthly webinars and discussions to delve further into the initiatives parliaments can take to enhance their outreach and partnership with the public. Over the past 9 months, with its partners, the IPU organized

five online events to showcase good practices and discuss lessons learned. Themes discussed included public engagement in parliamentary work on climate change; the use of social media in the Brazilian Parliament; the superpowers of "digital natives"; embedding public engagement into parliamentary practice in Kenya; and a case study of citizen-initiated legislation, the Clean Air Act in Thailand.

(iv) Activities carried out under Strategic Objective 3

118. Innovation and the capacity to adapt and respond to risks are crucial to the sustainability of parliamentary work. The IPU facilitates the exchange of good practices and provides support for innovation in parliament. The Union also supports better use of technology in parliament and by parliaments and their members.
119. The Centre for Innovation in Parliament (CIP) is functional. The regional hubs have been meeting to share good practices, brainstorm together and provide support. The central focus of the CIP's work in 2024 has been the use of artificial intelligence in parliaments. Parliaments in many countries are exploring the possibilities of this technology to support, simplify or even transform parliamentary work. Through the CIP hubs on Parliamentary Data Science and information technology governance, the technical experts in parliaments around the world have been able to communicate, share notes and discuss approaches.
120. Following the publication in March 2024 of the IPU Issue Brief *Using generative artificial intelligence in parliaments*, a multi-partner inter-parliamentary collaboration on AI in parliaments got underway. A meeting in April 2024 hosted by the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies brought together experts from 12 parliaments to sketch out a joint work plan. Parliamentary experts then worked online to develop guidelines for the use of AI in parliament. A first set of use cases for AI in parliaments that describe ways in which parliaments could use AI in their work was published in July 2024. A set of guidelines on AI in parliaments has been prepared and is scheduled for launch on 3rd December 2024.
121. In parallel, the IPU has participated in many online events relating to AI and developed new partnerships. In relation to the CIP work on AI in parliament and the IPU resolution on the impact of AI on democracy, the IPU and UNDP will jointly host a one-day expert consultation on parliamentary engagement in digital policy, bringing together parliaments, international organisations and technical experts to discuss how to ensure that parliaments get the support they need to enhance their effectiveness in digital policy-making.
122. The latest edition of the IPU's World e-Parliament report 2024, published in October, highlights significant progress in the digital landscape of legislatures worldwide. However, the report also points out an increasing digital divide between parliaments in rich and poor countries, which can have an impact on the quality of democracy. This is the eighth edition of the biennial IPU report, produced by the IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliament. The findings are based on survey responses from 115 parliamentary chambers in 86 countries and supranational parliaments.

123. The members of the IPU Working Group on Science and Technology, in consultation with scientists and experts from various fields, developed a Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology to ensure that the development and deployment of science and technology are carried out in a responsible, ethical and sustainable manner. To meet this objective, the Charter establishes a framework of principles, values and guidelines that serve to guide decision-making, research and development, ensuring that science and technology are used for the betterment of humanity, society and the environment. This framework will help bridge the gap that separates scientific innovation from legislative and parliamentary oversight and ensure that technological progress aligns with human values and principles, particularly those enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
 124. The draft Charter was circulated to all IPU Member Parliaments for comments. The IPU also organised a first-ever parliamentary side event at the 9th UN Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum), featuring a presentation of the draft IPU Charter and inviting comments from the various stakeholders before its final adoption at the 149th IPU Assembly in October 2024.
 125. The IPU Working Group on Science and Technology has also launched two surveys, the first for parliamentary staff on Parliamentary engagement with the scientific community and the second for parliamentarians on Understanding parliamentarians' use of scientific research. The report on the first survey was available online during the 149th IPU Assembly.
- (v) Activities carried out under Strategic Objective 4**
126. Strategic Objective 4 is at the heart of the IPU's work. It is all about peer-to-peer exchange, support and solidarity, and also about raising the voice of the parliamentary community to the global level. The IPU:
 - a) Facilitates global and regional platforms of exchange and learning, and parliamentary action.
 - b) Provides parliaments with opportunities to contribute to UN global processes.
 - c) Facilitates the inclusion of parliaments in UN review processes and mechanisms.
 127. IPU Assemblies are key moments in terms of enhanced collective parliamentary action. The 148th Assembly in Geneva brought together 144 IPU Member Parliaments and 1,479 delegates. IPU has held numerous meetings and exchanges to enhance parliamentary input to UN review processes. These include:
 - a) Seminars on the universal periodic review;
 - b) Seminars for parliaments from countries reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and
 - c) Meeting at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on voluntary national reviews.
 128. In 2024, the IPU continued its engagement with religion and belief to promote peace, inclusion and the rule of law. During the 148th Assembly, it organised a panel discussion

on interfaith dialogue titled “*Building bridges through interfaith dialogue for more peaceful and inclusive societies*” to take stock of interfaith relations and the state of religious freedom for the period since the 2023 Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. This activity was complemented by a working dinner where MPs from different religious and cultural backgrounds reflected on the potential for parliamentary diplomacy to build bridges for interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

129. In addition, the IPU invested efforts in raising the visibility of the parliamentary contribution to interfaith dialogue and freedom of religion or belief through participation in various events, including during the UN General Assembly at the 6th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue and at the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
130. Efforts were also pursued to bring the voice of parliaments into key UN processes. A Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 10th World Water Forum was held in May 2024 in Bali, Indonesia co-organized with the Indonesian Parliament. On that occasion, the Working Group on Science and Technology presented the Science for Peace Schools project and recommendations related to that work.
131. With regard to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, in April 2024, together with the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, the IPU organised a high-level workshop aimed at engaging MPs on nuclear security and associated legal instruments. These efforts were complemented by the IPU publication *Human security and common security to build peace*, which aims to serve as a guide for MPs in their efforts to prevent conflict at both national and international levels.
132. The publication highlights the growing global violence and complex nature of conflicts, which are increasingly fueled by transnational crime and exacerbated by modern challenges and new threats, and urges MPs to adopt an approach centered on human security, which focuses on the well-being of individuals through context-specific legislation, and common security, which emphasizes dialogue, multilateralism and collaboration to tackle global challenges and reduce conflict.
133. With regard to the IPU's political project at the UN, which aims to make the UN more open to the input and oversight of parliaments, the highlight of the year came with the Pact for the Future, which was adopted at the Summit of the Future in September 2024. The chapter on making the UN-centered multilateral system more fit for purpose includes a strong commitment by the UN to deepen relations with parliaments and the IPU as a way of making global governance more democratic and accountable.
134. The Summit of the Future was the centrepiece of a high-level week packed with events at which the IPU leadership was able to convey some of the Organization's key messages on the role of women in peacebuilding, violence against women, hate speech and interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Another milestone in the growing IPU-UN relationship came with a special meeting of the Security Council on "Leadership for Peace" held on 25-26 September 2024. The IPU Secretary General was invited to speak in what was only the IPU's second appearance before the Council in 20 years. His statement, which drew, among other points,

from the conclusions of the joint IPU-UN Parliamentary Hearing that was held in New York in February 2024 conveyed the IPU's message about the primacy of dialogue, including through parliaments, as the only way to prevent or resolve conflict.

135. Throughout the year, IPU Members contributed to high-level forums of the UN such as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum, the STI Forum, and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The latter also featured a special event for parliamentarians as well as the results of Sustainable Development Goals progress reviews to which some parliaments contributed. Another major event of the year was the Parliamentary Meeting at the Commission on the Status of Women, organized with UN Women, focusing on Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty as well as three side events dedicated to specific gender equality issues.
136. Besides parliamentary events or the participation of MPs in national delegations to the UN, the year also featured high-level engagement with UN officials. This included the participation of the Chef de Cabinet of the UN Secretary-General in two meetings of the Preparatory Committee of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament as well as the participation of ambassadors and UN officials in two briefings for MPs on the International Court of Justice and on the Peacebuilding Commission.
137. In 2024, the IPU welcomed a new Member, the Parliament of the Bahamas, increasing its membership to 180. It pursued its outreach to non-members and to small island States with a view to bringing the IPU to such regions. In June 2024, it held a regional seminar on climate change for Caribbean Parliaments.

(vi) Activities carried out under Strategic Objective 5

138. Enhanced accountability includes facilitating enhanced accountability among the IPU Member Parliaments and the secretariat. It also includes supporting transformational change at the IPU and building monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity.
139. With regard to the accountability of Members, this includes regular reporting on activities carried out in follow-up to IPU meetings which has improved in 2024 following enhanced outreach efforts. The accountability segments held at each Assembly shed light on the numerous initiatives taken by Members in following up on IPU resolutions and work.
140. The Working Group on Transparency, Accountability and Openness was established by the Governing Council in May 2021. The Group is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Transparency Report presented by an independent consultant in April 2020. Most of the policies recommended in the Transparency Report have since been endorsed and adopted by the Governing Council. In October 2023, the Policy to prevent and address harassment, including sexual harassment, at IPU Assemblies and other IPU events was adopted and implemented for the first time at the 148th Assembly. A Code of Conduct for IPU Governance Officials was also adopted.

141. During the Working Group's next meeting, the Secretariat would introduce a whistleblower protection policy and provide an update on the implementation of the Code of Conduct and anti-harassment policy. In addition, the Working Group will be invited to review progress made in relation to the Transparency Report and consider suspending its activities until such time as new recommendations regarding transparency, accountability and openness are raised.
142. Members expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General and his team for the work accomplished and in particular, for providing support to parliaments that are faced with challenging political environments. The report confirmed their trust in the Secretary-General and his colleagues, whom they encouraged to keep up their efforts towards the successful achievement of all strategic objectives. In this vein, they also highlighted the necessity that the recommendations and resolutions emerging from the various activities carried out by the IPU be transformed into actions for the benefit of the people.
143. Questions were raised regarding efforts towards universal membership. The Governing Council took note of this interim report by the Secretary-General. A more comprehensive report on the impact of the IPU's work throughout 2024 will be presented at the next Assembly as per usual practice.

3. IPU's financial situation

144. The Governing Council received a report on the financial situation of the IPU as of 31st July 2024 and an updated list of unpaid assessed contributions. Reporting on behalf of the Executive Committee, Mr. M. Dick of Australia, President of the Sub-Committee on Finance, noted that the IPU's budget performance was on track and the Organization's finances were currently healthy and stable.
145. Global investment markets had had a positive start to the year, and the investment portfolio for the IPU and its closed Pension Fund had seen a positive return of 6% so far in 2024. The situation of voluntary funding also appeared healthy for the remainder of the year. The Executive Committee discussed the arrears in assessed contributions which now stood at CHF 2.1 million following recent receipts by certain Member Parliaments that had long-accumulated arrears.

4. IPU's consolidated budget for the year 2025

146. The consolidated draft budget for the year 2025 was presented to the Governing Council. The draft budget had been prepared under the supervision of the Sub-Committee on Finance and had been reviewed in detail by the Executive Committee. Reporting on behalf of the Executive Committee, Mr. M. Dick of Australia summarised the draft budget which was projected at a total of CHF 18.2 million in income and expenditure. He noted that the work of the IPU would continue across the five objectives as set out in the 2022-2026 Strategy with particular attention in some specific areas. 2025 was to witness a special policy focus on gender equality and women's rights as it would mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing

Platform for Action and the 25th anniversary of the UN Security Council resolution on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

147. The IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians will also be celebrating 40 years of existence. In addition, the IPU would maintain its momentum on the previous priority themes of climate action and peace and security, given the multiple crises and conflicts currently ongoing or emerging. At the same time, the Organization would continue to invest in its digital transformation to enhance its impact as well as its delivery for Member Parliaments.
148. In terms of income, the core budget included an increase of 3% in total assessed contributions, as agreed previously by the Governing Council in order to rebalance total contributions by the end of the current strategy period back to their level of 2011. Resource mobilisation was estimated to generate voluntary contributions amounting to CHF 4.3 million in 2025 or 24% of the total income budget. This would be a slight increase in expected voluntary income compared to 2024.
149. The Union was anticipating the extension of some major multi-year grants from Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the European Union and the Parliament of Qatar, among others. Mr. Dick encouraged all delegates to help with the mobilisation of voluntary funds for the IPU from within their own countries and geopolitical groups.
150. The Governing Council approved the 2025 consolidated budget of CHF 18.2 as presented by the sub-committee on Finance.

5. Questions relating to IPU membership and observer status

151. The IPU is continuing its campaign to secure all the parliaments of the 193 Member States of the United Nations among its membership. In this light, the Governing Council warmly welcomed the Parliament of Jamaica back to the Organization, thus increasing the IPU membership to 181. In the same vein, the Governing Council took note that representatives of the Legislative Council of Brunei Darussalam were attending the 149th Assembly in view of possible affiliation to the Organization at the 150th Assembly.
152. The Governing Council reiterated its commitment to reaching universal membership, including readmission of the Congress of the United States of America. The Council was apprised of a request for observer status from the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds and Palestine. According to the Executive Committee, this organization was the same as the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds with just the addition of “and Palestine” to its name, an organization whose request for observer status had been rejected in Manama in March 2023 by the governing bodies. The Governing Council therefore endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Committee to uphold the previous decision on this matter.
153. The Governing Council approved the recommendation of the Executive Committee to suspend the membership rights of the Central African Republic and the Congo in accordance with Article 5.3 of the Statutes. They would henceforth be listed as non-

participating Members of the IPU alongside Haiti, Honduras and Papua New Guinea until such time as they wished to re-engage with the Organization.

154. The Governing Council concurred with the Executive Committee on the importance of engaging closely with the small island developing States (SIDS) which are facing the challenges of climate change and financial difficulties. The Governing Council expressed its support for the approach of exploring all possible avenues to encourage and facilitate the participation of the SIDS in the work of the IPU and to help make their voices better heard.
155. The Governing Council heard the Secretary General's report on the situation of certain parliaments, grouped into four categories and approved the recommendations made by the Executive Committee. In the category of non-functioning parliaments, the Governing Council took note that there had been no progress in the situation of Afghanistan since the last Assembly. In 2022, when the Taliban took power in the country and dissolved the elected parliament, in a gesture of solidarity, the IPU governing bodies decided to recognize the dissolved parliament and allow it to participate in the IPU with the status of non-voting observer. The Governing Council decided to maintain its previous position in that regard.
156. The Parliament of Bangladesh was a new case submitted for the attention of the Governing Council as it had recently been dissolved following sociopolitical unrest under the then-administration of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. According to the Constitution of the country, fresh elections were to have been organised within 90 days of the dissolution of the Parliament, that is by the end of November 2024.
157. The Governing Council took note with concern of the arrest of several former parliamentarians whose cases were now being reviewed by the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The parliamentarians concerned included former prominent governance officials of the IPU, namely former IPU President, Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury, former Chair of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, Mr. Fazle Chowdhury and former Chair of the Advisory Group on Health, Dr. Habibe Millat.
158. The Governing Council welcomed the outreach efforts of the Secretary General of the IPU to the new Prime Minister of the country, Mr. Muhammad Yunus, which had contributed to the release of Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury. Taking note with regret of the developments in Bangladesh, the Governing Council deferred any decision on the situation until parliamentary elections had taken place.

(i) Guinea Bissau

159. Guinea-Bissau was in the throes of crisis following a standoff between the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira and the President of the Republic, Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló. The latter had unconstitutionally dissolved the Parliament and blocked access to its premises. Speaker Pereira had requested the IPU's support to solve this situation and had participated in the Organization's initiative for transitional parliaments. In a gesture of solidarity, the IPU continued to recognize Mr. Pereira as the elected Speaker

of the Parliament of Guinea-Bissau. The Governing Council took note with regret of this unfortunate situation and urged the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to adhere to the Constitution and organise elections to allow the Parliament to function.

(ii) Myanmar

160. The case of Myanmar was similar to that of Afghanistan. The Governing Council decided to maintain its former decision to recognise the Parliament elected in 2020 which now met as the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw as the interlocutor of the IPU with the status of non-voting observer.

(iii) Niger

161. In Niger, there were prospects of a legislative body being established as a delegation from the country had recently conducted a visit to Burkina Faso and Mali to get inspiration on the arrangements for setting up a transitional parliament. A representative of Niger who met the Secretary-General in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly confirmed that the authorities were awaiting input from the Nigerien diaspora with a view to establishing a transitional legislative body. Counting on the goodwill of the Nigerien authorities to establish such a body without delay, the Governing Council decided to accord Niger the same treatment as it did to other transitional parliaments in West Africa.

(iv) Haiti

162. In the case of Haiti, where there was still no functioning parliament, the Governing Council maintained its previous decision to keep its membership rights suspended until elections take place at which time the Parliament would resume its normal position in the IPU.

(v) Venezuela

163. In the case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Governing Council took note of the report on the extensive discussions the Executive Committee had had on the situation. The Governing Council concurred with the Executive Committee that the IPU must uphold its core values, in particular a commitment to engage in dialogue, when considering its contribution to the resolution of the ongoing crisis in the country. The Governing Council approved the recommendation of the Executive Committee to keep open the channels of dialogue with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the basis of a roadmap and timeline which the Secretary General would prepare for further discussion by the governing bodies.

(vi) Sudan

164. Sudan was in a similar situation to Haiti with no prospect of a new election any time soon. The Governing Council decided to maintain the suspension of Sudan until the establishment of a newly elected parliament.

(vii) Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea and Mali

165. In the second category of parliaments under review, the Governing Council considered the transitional parliaments. It took together the West and Central African transitional parliaments, namely Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea and Mali and decided to retain their membership along with confirming the Secretary General's mandate to support their efforts towards a speedy return to constitutional order. The Governing Council took note of the positive developments in some of those countries, where the drafting of new constitutions indicated that a return to normality was on track. The Governing Council encouraged the transitional bodies concerned to accelerate their efforts in that regard and welcomed with appreciation the ongoing execution of the mandate it had given to the Secretary General on the issue.

(viii) Yemen

166. Yemen had been under the IPU's monitoring mechanism since 2011 and little had changed since the Governing Council's last session in March 2024. The Governing Council therefore maintained its previous position to recognize the Parliament based in Aden that is aligned with the UN-recognized authorities.

(ix) Kuwait

167. The parliament of Kuwait had been dissolved several times in recent years and was currently suspended with no prospect of elections in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, the Emir had assumed legislative power in accordance with the country's Constitution. Considering that the Parliament of Kuwait was among the more progressive legislatures in the region, the Governing Council decided to continue to monitor the situation and consider it once again in the context of its 295th session in April 2025.

(x) Libya

168. For Libya, the Governing Council took note that the Parliament initially based in Tobruk, which it had previously recognized as the country's legitimate Parliament and which was now operating from Benghazi was functioning but difficulties with organizing new elections remained. The Governing Council reiterated its past recommendation for the Libyan authorities to speed up the process for organizing elections that would allow a fully-fledged parliament to be established.

(xi) South Sudan

169. South Sudan's transitional parliament had received the support that the governing bodies had mandated the Secretary General to provide. The Governing Council took note that the elections expected for December 2024 had now been postponed to 2026 following the extension of the transitional period aimed at bringing all parties on board with the arrangements for a return to constitutional order.

(xii) Palestine

170. The third category covered countries where the political situation was impacting parliament's capacity to function. In Palestine, there was little to report apart from the ongoing conflict raging in the region. The last elections were held in 2006 and in the meantime, the Palestinian National Council had exercised Palestine's membership in the IPU. The Governing Council took note of the absence of developments and expressed the wish that in an ideal situation, new elections would take place as soon as possible.

(xiii) Bosnia and Herzegovina and Peru

171. In the fourth category, countries where the political situation constitutes a potential threat to parliaments' capacity to function, the Governing Council approved the recommendation of the Executive Committee to remove Bosnia and Herzegovina and Peru from the list of parliaments under review as the political situation had stabilized in those countries.

6. IPU priority themes

172. The Secretary-General explained that his report on activities carried out in 2024 included information on efforts led by the Organization around the 2024 priority theme of peace and security. He recalled that work on the 2024 priority theme included the IPU's efforts in terms of mediation and parliamentary diplomacy, for instance through the Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus or the dialogue between the Speakers of the Parliaments of Armenia and Azerbaijan.
173. In addition, special emphasis had been placed on the concepts of human security and common security in parliaments. The IPU had just launched a publication on Human security and common security to build peace which was intended as a guide for MPs in their efforts to prevent conflict at both national and international levels. These initiatives complemented work carried out to support disarmament efforts, transitional parliaments and post-conflict reconstruction.
174. The Secretary-General explained that the proposed 2025 priority theme was gender equality. 2025 would be a year of several milestones for the empowerment of women and girls. It would mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 25th anniversary of the UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the 10-year milestone of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
175. As a leading organisation for the advancement of gender equality, the IPU had an important role to play in mobilising the parliamentary community and facilitating the identification of its own course of action towards the realization of all such crucial commitments. The IPU would have its own internal milestones to celebrate too as 2025 would mark the 40th anniversary of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. 2024 had already been a pivotal year for gender equality in politics with 70 elections having taken place or scheduled before the end of the year.

176. Trends so far in terms of women's election to parliament were not positive with evidence of stagnation, if not backsliding. Pushbacks were also increasing with regard to women and girls' rights, freedoms and empowerment. The disproportionate effects of conflict and war on women and girls, the rollback of reproductive health, rights and justice and other attempts to challenge women's rights were all important signals of the importance of efforts for gender equality. The IPU, as an unwavering champion of gender equality had therefore decided to rededicate its efforts towards gender equality by proposing it as its priority theme for 2025. The proposal was approved by the Governing Council.

7. Future inter-parliamentary meetings

177. The Governing Council approved the list of future inter-parliamentary meetings as recommended by the Executive Committee. The Governing Council took note of the confirmation by the Executive Committee that during COP29, the Parliamentary Meeting would take place in the Green Zone. Parliamentary delegations would therefore also have access to many of the other deliberative processes that would be taking place during this major event. The full list of meetings as approved forms '*annexure 2*' of this report.
178. The Governing Council took note of the request of the Executive Committee parliamentary delegations attending meetings in New York make use of the support of both the IPU's New York Office and their respective permanent missions in the city to facilitate their participation.

8. Amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules

179. The Governing Council unanimously adopted amendments to the Rules of the Governing Council, the Rules of the Executive Committee, the Rules of the Standing Committees, the Rules of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and the Rules and Working Modalities of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians. All the rules as adopted form '*annexure 3*' of this report.

9. Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

180. The Governing Council took note of an update on the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which had met for the first time on 16th and 17th May 2024 and would meet again just after the Assembly on 18th October 2024.
181. The Governing Council endorsed the appointment by the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean of Ms. L. Adderley of Bahamas to the Preparatory Committee to replace Ms. M. Guerra Castillo (Mexico) who was no longer a Speaker of Parliament and the appointment by the African Group of Ms. J. Nunu Kumba of South Sudan to fill an existing vacancy. Other vacancies remained unfilled.

182. The Sixth World Conference of Speakers will take place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 29th to 31st July 2025, preceded by the Fifteenth Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in Bern on 28th July 2025.

10. IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology

183. The IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology began life as an initiative of the IPU Working Group on Science and Technology. A first draft was circulated at the 148th Assembly to Member Parliaments, relevant partners and experts who had subsequently shared their insights and suggestions on the Charter, which enriched and enhanced it thereby making it more comprehensive and inclusive. After careful integration of relevant feedback and finalisation, the Charter was submitted to the Executive Committee which recommended it for adoption by the Governing Council an initiative that aligned seamlessly with the theme of the 149th IPU Assembly. The Charter as approved forms ‘‘*annexure 3*’’ of the report.

11. Reports of committees and other bodies

184. The Governing Council approved the recommendations contained in the reports on the activities of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (CHRP), the Committee on Middle East Questions, the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus, the Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG), the Working Group on Science and Technology, the Gender Partnership Group and the Advisory Group on Health.

12. Cremer-Passy Prize

185. At the suggestion of the Prize Selection Board and on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Governing Council approved amendments to the Rules of the Cremer-Passy Prize as follows:
- a) Extension of the deadline to 30th June every year to allow the geopolitical groups more time in which to make their nominations;
 - b) Replacement of the current system of a primary candidate and one alternate per geopolitical group with one male and one female nomination to ensure that the pool of candidates, 12 in total would be gender balanced;
 - c) Removal of the criterion of grassroots support which is difficult to evaluate. Candidates would henceforth be evaluated on the basis of four criteria rather than the previous five.
186. The President announced that nominations were now open for the 2025 edition of the Cremer-Passy Prize. Nominees were expected to have an exceptional record on gender equality, the IPU’s priority theme for 2025.

PART 4

4. 294TH SESSION OF THE IPU'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

187. The IPU's Executive Committee transacted its 29th Session as follows:

1. Sub-Committee on Finance

188. The President of the Sub-Committee on Finance, Mr. M. Dick of Australia informed the Executive Committee of the Sub-Committee's deliberations prior to the session of the Executive Committee. The Sub-Committee had reviewed the financial situation of the IPU as of 31st July 2024. The Organization's budget performance was on track for the year so far, and its finances were healthy and stable. The situation of voluntary funding was also in healthy shape for the remainder of 2024. Accumulated arrears of assessed contributions stood at CHF 2.3 million at the time of the Sub-Committee's meeting.

189. The Sub-Committee discussed the IPU's draft budget for 2025 and reviewed the budget document, which it presented to the Executive Committee in full. The core budget included a 3% increase in total assessed contributions as agreed previously by the Governing Council, aimed at rebalancing total contributions back to their level of 2011 by the end of the current Strategy period. At the same time, voluntary income was projected to increase slightly as various grants had been received or renewed.

190. The Sub-Committee advised the Executive Committee to recommend the 2025 budget to the Governing Council. The Executive Committee also received the Secretary General's usual update on the mobilisation of voluntary funding. As the new President of the Sub-Committee on Finance, Mr. Dick expressed his appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi of the United Arab Emirates for his outstanding service to the Sub-Committee. He also thanked the IPU Secretariat team for their work.

2. Questions relating to IPU membership and observer status

191. The Executive Committee noted with satisfaction that the IPU's efforts in favour of universal membership were paying off as it had received a request from the Parliament of Jamaica for reaffiliation which it accepted and recommended to the Governing Council for approval. The Executive Committee also received a request for observer status from the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds and Palestine. Following an in-depth review, the Executive Committee concluded that the organization in question was the same as the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds – with just the addition of “and Palestine” to its name – whose request for observer status had been rejected in Manama in March 2023. It therefore maintained its initial decision and reported this information to the Governing Council.

3. IPU regional offices

192. The Executive Committee was informed about progress with the establishment of regional offices in Uruguay and Egypt. An agreement had been signed between the Government of Uruguay and the IPU which granted the IPU international organisation status in Uruguay, entitling it to the relevant privileges and immunities. The signing of this agreement marked an initial step towards establishing a Regional Office in Montevideo for which the Host Parliament had designated suitable premises. Subsequently, the Secretariat shared a draft operational agreement with the Parliament of Uruguay outlining the office's functional modalities, including operational and budgetary elements.
193. In order to address the Parliament's financial constraints while maintaining enthusiasm for the project, the Secretariat proposed temporary arrangements for two years. These would be implemented if the conditions set by the Governing Council on 12th October 2022 were met, notably ensuring the IPU's functional independence. The temporary arrangements were designed to be cost-neutral for the IPU. In Egypt, the IPU Secretariat had engaged with the Parliament regarding the draft Host Agreement and budget. The Parliament was gathering examples of host agreements with other international organizations to expedite negotiations on the IPU agreement, focusing on immunities and privileges.

4. Working Group on Transparency, Accountability and Openness

194. The Executive Committee was apprised of the achievements of the Working Group. Most of the recommendations of the Transparency Report submitted to the Governing Council in 2021 had now been implemented. At the next meeting of the Working Group, the Secretariat would introduce a whistleblower protection policy and provide an update on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Governance Officials and anti-harassment policy.
195. In addition, the Working Group would be invited to review progress made in relation to the Transparency Report and consider suspending its activities until such time as new recommendations regarding transparency, accountability and openness were raised.

5. IPU Secretariat

196. The Executive Committee was briefed on staff movements in the IPU Secretariat, including several promotions. The Executive Committee also began discussions on the administrative arrangements for the IPU President, with a view to possible enhanced support in future.

PART 5

5. SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

1. The Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians

197. The Committee held its 175th session from 12th to 16th October 2024. All sittings were chaired by the Committee President, Hon. Millie Odhiambo, the Minority Party Whip of the National Assembly of Kenya. Mr. B. Mbuku Laka of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. E. Blanc of France, Ms. L. Fehlmann Rielle of Switzerland and Mr. H. Kamboni of Zambia physically participated in the session while Ms. L. Quartapelle of Italy and Ms. C. Asiain Pereira of Uruguay participated virtually.
198. The Committee conducted hearings on cases of human rights violations faced by several MPs in Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Guinea Bissau, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Venezuela. The common violations included attacks on freedom of expression, suspension or loss of parliamentary mandate, threats, intimidation, torture, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance.

(i) Bangladesh

199. The alleged human rights violations related to threats, acts of intimidation and violence, as well as lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians.

Case Summary

200. **Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury**, a former member of Bangladesh's Parliament and Honorary President of the IPU, is being prosecuted in a series of criminal proceedings that were initiated after anti-government and pro-democracy protests in Bangladesh brought about the resignation of the Prime Minister and the dissolution of Parliament in early August 2024.
201. According to the complainant, the multiple charges against Mr. S. H. Chowdhury are politically motivated and range from sedition, conspiracy and murder to unlawful assembly and use of explosives in connection with incidents that happened between 2015 and 2024. The complainant alleges that these proceedings were initiated as part of a revenge spree against prominent members of the ousted Awami League party, of which Mr. S. H. Chowdhury was a key figure. The complainant also states that due process has not been followed in the proceedings against Mr. S. H. Chowdhury, raising concerns about the legitimacy of the charges and the protection of his fundamental rights. The cases are still under investigation and key details are yet to be disclosed.
202. According to the complainant, in addition to the alleged politically motivated legal proceedings, Mr. S. H. Chowdhury's personal safety is under threat. The complainant reports that his family residence was attacked and set on fire on 5th August 2024 with the assailants allegedly stating their intent to murder Mr. S. H. Chowdhury and his family.

203. In September 2024, the interim government of Bangladesh announced the creation of a ministerial committee, along with one committee for each district, with the purpose of identifying and recommending the withdrawal of proceedings filed with the intent to harass political leaders, activists and innocent persons. According to the complainant, this arrangement appears to place the onus on the accused to demonstrate their innocence.
204. On 6th October 2024, Mr. S. H. Chowdhury was arrested and brought to court the following day. Pictures and videos provided by the complainant and available on the internet show Mr. S. H. Chowdhury entering and leaving the courthouse with his physical integrity visibly at risk with eggs, stones and blunt objects being thrown at him. According to the complainant, five additional cases were unexpectedly added to the file during the trial, denying Mr. S. H. Chowdhury's legal team a fair opportunity to defend him.
205. On 8th October 2024, Mr. S. H. Chowdhury was granted bail in six of the cases for which he had been detained. However, other cases, including seven for murder, remain pending. Upon his release, Mr. S. H. Chowdhury was immediately taken to a hospital for medical treatment, as he had been seriously injured when a brick was thrown at his head, causing severe trauma. The complainant has expressed serious concerns about Mr. S. H. Chowdhury's safety while in hospital given the lack of law enforcement protection for both Mr. S. H. Chowdhury and his family. The complainant also urges that all travel restrictions on Mr. S. H. Chowdhury be lifted so that he can seek urgent medical treatment abroad, as his life remains in danger in his home country.

Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

206. The Committee held and recommended as follows:
- a) That the complaint concerning Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury, a former member of Bangladesh's Parliament and Honorary President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is admissible, considering that the complaint (i) was submitted in due form by a qualified complainant under section I(1)(a) of the Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints (Annex I of the revised Rules and Practices of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians); (ii) concerns a sitting member of parliament at the time of the alleged facts; and (iii) concerns allegations of threats and acts of violence and intimidation and of lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, which are allegations that fall within the Committee's mandate;
 - b) Welcomes the release on bail of Mr. S. H. Chowdhury on 8th October 2024 and the assurances provided by the interim government to the IPU leadership that the new administration in Bangladesh is striving to restore the rule of law and address the numerous challenges it faces with full respect for legality; however, expresses its deep concern at the acts of violence to which Mr. S. H. Chowdhury was allegedly subjected during his court appearance on 7 October 2024, resulting in injuries; considers that, as Mr. S. H. Chowdhury was in custody, the State of Bangladesh had

a responsibility to ensure his safety and physical integrity and that it failed to fulfil this duty; urges in this regard the relevant authorities to take the necessary steps to investigate these attacks, to provide information on progress made in the identification and punishment of those responsible, and to ensure that such acts of violence do not recur in future court appearances and that he continues to receive medical treatment in a safe place for as long as necessary;

- c) Expresses its deep concern also at the allegations of serious violations of the right to a fair trial in the proceedings against Mr. S. H. Chowdhury and at the alleged use of the judiciary as part of a revenge campaign against prominent members of the Awami League; recalls that the fairness of proceedings implies, among other things, the absence of any direct or indirect influence, pressure, intimidation or interference, from whatever source and for whatever motive; requests the relevant national authorities to provide official and detailed information on the facts justifying each of the charges brought against Mr. S. H. Chowdhury; and expresses its firm hope that due process will be guaranteed at all stages of the proceedings in accordance with applicable national and international standards; 4. - 3 - CL/214/18(a)-R.1 Geneva, 17 October 2024
- d) Fails to understand how the creation of ad hoc non-judicial mechanisms with the aim of identifying and recommending the withdrawal of proceedings filed with the intention of harassing political leaders, which appears to first require the accused to prove their innocence, would contribute to ensuring that the requirements of competence, independence and impartiality of the judiciary are met; recalls that the presumption of innocence, which is fundamental to the protection of human rights, places the burden of proof on the prosecution, guarantees that no guilt can be presumed until the charge has been proved beyond reasonable doubt, ensures that the accused has the benefit of the doubt, and requires that persons accused of a criminal offence must be treated in accordance with this principle; and wishes in this regard to receive official and detailed information on the mandate and legal basis of the functioning of these bodies; 5. 6. 7.
- e) Mandates a trial observer to monitor the upcoming court proceedings in the present case and wishes to be kept informed of the dates of the trial when available and of any other relevant judicial developments in the case;
- f) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the relevant authorities of Bangladesh, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.

207. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(ii) **Democratic Republic of Congo**

208. The alleged human rights violations included threats, acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, lack of due process at the investigation stage, violation of freedom of opinion and expression and failure to respect parliamentary immunity.

Case Summary

209. On 9th August 2022, **Mr. Jean Marc Kabund, MP** and former First Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly was arrested and prosecuted for defaming the authorities, public insults and spreading false rumours after he delivered a speech on 18 July 2022 where he criticised the President of the Republic. He was arrested after the Bureau of the National Assembly allegedly authorised proceedings against him by lifting his parliamentary immunity on 8th August. The Bureau had allegedly already criticised the MP's speech in an official statement published on 21 July 2022.
210. The acts of which Mr. Kabund is accused are covered under Ordinance Law No. 300 of 16 December 1963 on defamation against the Head of State and other articles of the criminal law of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to the complainant, the allegations against Mr. Kabund are a violation of his right to freedom of expression and are politically motivated given the growing political differences between him and the party of President Tshisékédi to which Mr. Kabund belonged until he decided to join the opposition and create a new political party – *l'Alliance pour le changement* (the Alliance for Change) on 18th July 2022. The complainant claims that the case is part of a political strategy aimed at intimidating and using the judiciary against President Tshisekedi's political opponents.
211. On 12th August 2022, the Court of Cassation ordered that the MP be placed under house arrest. However, this decision was never implemented. At the first hearing of the trial, which took place on 5th September 2022, Mr. Kabund's lawyers demanded that the said decision be implemented before proceeding with the trial, which was postponed at their request. On 12th September 2022, the date of the adjournment, Mr. Kabund did not attend the hearing for medical reasons. During hearing on 14th November 2022, Mr. Kabund's lawyers raised an objection of unconstitutionality concerning the number of offences brought against him. While the National Assembly reportedly authorized proceedings against the MP for only five offences, the Public Prosecutor prosecuted Mr. Kabund for 12 violations.
212. Following the rejection of this objection by the Court of Cassation, Mr. Kabund's lawyers filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court. The proceedings were therefore suspended until 27th April 2023, when the Constitutional Court rejected Mr. Kabund's complaint on the grounds that it was admissible but unfounded and referred the case back to the Court of Cassation. On 13th September 2023, the Court of Cassation sentenced Mr. Kabund to seven years' imprisonment for "defamation against the Head of State" and "spreading false rumours". Mr Kabund's lawyers stressed that this sentence was unjust and excessive, adding that they had no other means of appeal due to the lack of any reform with respect to judicial proceedings applicable to MPs allowing the possibility of appeal.

213. At a hearing with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at the 147th IPU Assembly in October 2023, the Congolese delegation led by the First Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly stated that the National Assembly followed the required procedure to protect the MP's rights of defence, enabling him to continue to enjoy his immunities during the judicial investigation phase.
214. At the end of this investigation, the Public Prosecutor's Office found that the offences committed by Mr. Kabund were serious to require the lifting of his parliamentary immunity in order to prosecute him. However, before lifting his immunity, the National Assembly Bureau reportedly invited Mr. Kabund to meet with its members in the presence of a lawyer, an invitation he allegedly declined on two occasions. Instead, Mr. Kabund is said to have asked the Bureau to stay the proceedings against him, which the Bureau was unable to accommodate, considering that this request fell outside its remit.
215. The President of the Bureau of the National Assembly therefore referred the matter to the plenary, which decided to lift Mr. Kabund's parliamentary immunity. Asked about the severity of the sentence handed down against Mr. Kabund simply for making remarks, the First Deputy Speaker pointed out that, under Congolese law, judges have the discretionary power to impose sentences ranging from 1 to 10 years' imprisonment for similar offences. Thus, although the sentence handed down against Mr. Kabund appears severe, it remains within the limits of the law.
216. Furthermore, the delegation pointed out that the National Assembly could not interfere with the Congolese justice system, in accordance with Article 149 of the Constitution, which enshrines the independence of the judiciary. The Congolese authorities nevertheless stressed the importance they attach to the right to freedom of expression, which should not be used to infringe the Constitution.
217. On 20th December 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo held general elections against a background of disruption, malfunctioning, violence and accusations of attempted fraud. A number of voices among the opposition and observers condemned the chaotic legislative elections, the outcome of which would only inflame the political tensions in the country. Mr. Félix Tshisekedi was re-elected President of the Republic and his political party won the majority of seats in the National Assembly. During the 149th IPU Assembly, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians met with the Congolese delegation and discussed Mr. Kabund's case.
218. The delegation underlined that Article 107 of the Congolese Constitution established the principle of absolute immunity for parliamentarians in the context of the exercise of their duties, and that this immunity was absolute under the provisions of the said article. Nevertheless, according to the delegation, the remarks for which Mr. Kabund was tried and sentenced were not made in the context of the exercise of his parliamentary duties. The delegation stated that in his speech, Mr. Kabund had insulted the honour of the Head of State on the basis of unfounded accusations. As a result, he had been prosecuted, his immunity had been lifted and he had been sentenced in accordance with the Congolese legislation in force.

219. Regarding the request for a Committee mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the delegation stated that the mission would be welcome and that the National Assembly was available to facilitate the organisation of the mission in the near future.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

220. The Committee held and recommended as follows:

- a) Remains concerned at the severity of Mr. Kabund's sentence of seven years' imprisonment for making critical remarks against the Head of State and government policy; and considers that, even if these remarks were provocative in nature, they were part of the exercise of his fundamental right to freedom of expression and were in no way accompanied by hostile acts aimed at disrupting public order;
- b) Recalls that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which recognizes the right to security of person and the right to freedom of opinion, expression and assembly; consequently, stresses that Mr. Kabund's sentence is not in line with the international commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the area of freedom of expression;
- c) Calls on the National Assembly, once again, to protect its members' right to freedom of expression, regardless of their political affiliation by taking all necessary measures to strengthen protection of this fundamental right, including by repealing Ordinance Law No. 300 of 16 December 1963 on offences constituting defamation against the Head of State or by bringing it into line with international human rights standards, as soon as possible, in order to prevent the recurrence of such cases; and wishes to be kept informed in this regard;
- d) Deplores the absence of the possibility of appeal in legal proceedings against the Democratic Republic of the Congo MPs; recalls that the possibility of appeal constitutes one of the main elements of due process; and calls on the Parliament of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to create such a mechanism, so that MPs' right to a defence in legal proceedings is protected in the same way as that of other citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- e) Is pleased at the National Assembly's willingness to facilitate and welcome a mission of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to the DRC under the best possible conditions and hopes that this mission will take place in the near future and that it will include meetings with the relevant Congolese authorities, in particular the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Justice, as well as Mr. Kabund in detention and relevant third parties, in order to promote a satisfactory settlement of this case; and

- f) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

221. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17 October 2024)

(iii) The Democratic Republic of Congo

222. The alleged human rights violations were murder and abduction.

Case Summary

223. On 13th July 2023, *Mr. Chérubin Okende* an opposition MP, former Minister of Transport and spokesperson for the *Ensemble pour la République* (Together for the Republic), a political party led by opposition candidate in the presidential elections Moïse Katumbi was found murdered. According to the complainants, he was shot in the head inside his vehicle, which had been abandoned on a road near Kinshasa City Centre. Mr. Okende had reportedly disappeared the day before he was killed.

224. The same day, the Public Prosecutor's Office at Kinshasa Gombe High Court, on the instruction of the Prosecutor General at the Court of Cassation, opened a murder investigation against persons unknown. Mr. Chérubin Okende's death occurred within a particularly difficult context for political opponents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the democratic space is shrinking and violations are committed against those speaking out against the incumbent regime. His disappearance has raised many questions relating to safety in the DRC, particularly the safety of political opponents.

225. Shortly after Mr. Okende's death, the contents of a confidential report attributed to the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) were published by Radio France International (RFI) and Jeune Afrique media on 31 August 2023. According to the report, military intelligence was responsible for Mr. Okende's death. The journalist who accessed this report was imprisoned in September 2023 and then convicted of disseminating false information. He was released in March 2024 after serving his six-month prison sentence. The Congolese authorities have stated that the report was wrongly attributed to the ANR and that its contents were totally false.

226. At a hearing before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at the 147th IPU Assembly in October 2023, the Congolese delegation said that the National Assembly Speaker had expressed concern at the murder of Mr. Okende in his speech marking the opening of the autumn session in September 2023. MPs, including the First Deputy Speaker, had visited Mr. Okende's family to support them and the National Assembly continued to provide financial support to his family and the group of lawyers in charge of his case. The delegation also confirmed that the Public Prosecutor had opened a judicial investigation seeking the assistance of international experts from Belgium, South Africa

- and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC who agreed to collaborate with the Congolese authorities in this case.
227. The delegation said that the report drawn up at the end of this judicial investigation would be published very shortly and that the National Assembly would send it to the Committee as soon as it was available. Despite the assurances from the Congolese authorities at their hearing, the investigation report has not been made available to the Committee.
 228. On 7th November 2023, Mr. Okende's family lodged a complaint in Belgium against Colonel-Major Christian Ndaywell, head of the Congolese military intelligence, whom they suspect of involvement in the death of the MP. The complaint was lodged as a civil action with a Brussels investigating judge on charges of war crimes. As a Belgian national, Mr. Ndaywell is subject to Belgian justice, which can prosecute him under its universal jurisdiction in criminal matters. The case was referred to the Brussels Public Prosecutor's Office, which notified the federal Public Prosecutor's Office on 14 December 2023. The federal Public Prosecutor's Office is currently considering whether the case can be handled at the federal level.
 229. On 22nd January 2024, Mr. Okende's family sent a letter to the DRC's Prosecutor General requesting a report within 72 hours on the progress of the case and the findings of the autopsy performed on the MP's remains. Six months after his death, the autopsy report had still not been made available to the complainants or the lawyers.
 230. On 29th February 2024, the Public Prosecutor announced that the cause of Mr. Okende's death was suicide, according to the analyses carried out and following the discovery of his personal diary in which he had written that he was "*at the end of his tether*". The complainants question this information, given that the suicide theory put forward by the authorities does not correspond to the images of Mr. Okende's body that had been widely circulated on social networks and other media.
 231. In September 2024, the family's lawyer announced that the family had again filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor asking for the investigation to be reopened. However, it appears that they have not had any response by the Congolese judiciary to their complaint. During the 149th IPU Assembly in Geneva, the Committee met with the Congolese delegation to discuss Mr. Okende's case. The delegation stated that in accordance with the Criminal Procedure in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, investigations were secret, but that defendants were given access to investigation and autopsy reports with the prior authorisation of the Public Prosecutor's Office.
 232. According to the delegation, Mr. Okende's family and lawyers were given access to the two reports in their entirety, as they had brought proceedings in Belgian courts against Colonel Major Christian Ndaywell. The delegation added that the Public Prosecutor's Office had cooperated diligently with Mr. Okende's family, despite the family having refused to cooperate with the Congolese authorities. For greater transparency in this case, the Public Prosecutor's Office allegedly also informed the Bureau of the National Assembly that it had invited the Catholic Church which had expressed doubts about the

investigation report to discuss the case. This discussion reportedly lasted for more than four hours in order to clarify a number of elements in the investigation report.

233. With regard to the Committee's request to obtain the legal investigation report, the delegation stated that the parliamentary authorities could contact the Public Prosecutor's Office and ask for the said reports to be shared with the Committee, stressing that the best way to access these reports was to conduct a mission in the DRC, which the parliamentary authorities were prepared to facilitate and support.
234. Concerning the evidence according to which Mr. Okende had supposedly committed suicide, the delegation explained that analyses and samples relating to the deceased's car and body had been carried out and that this evidence had been backed up by the conclusions of international experts who had been invited to work with the Congolese Public Prosecutor's Office in the course of the investigation. According to the delegation, Belgium, South Africa and MONUSCO had sent teams who had carried out completely independent investigations.
235. The teams from South Africa and MONUSCO reportedly concluded that it was indeed a case of suicide, while the Belgian team allegedly expressed doubts that it was a case of murder, but without concluding that Mr. Okende had killed himself. The delegation stressed that there was a considerable discrepancy between the result of the investigation and the way the press had presented the case. Contrary to what was reported by the press, Mr. Okende's body was not "riddled with bullets". The Public Prosecutor's Office had reportedly found a single bullet, which had apparently gone through the MP's head. Some of the information examined by the Public Prosecutor's Office, including statements by the MP's bodyguard and his wife, contained elements that were contradictory and unverifiable.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

236. The Committee held and recommended as follows:
 - a) Deplores, the death of opposition MP, Mr. Chérubin Okende, while taking into account the information shared by the Congolese delegation, in particular the international cooperation of the Congolese Public Prosecutor's Office with the Belgian, South African and MONUSCO authorities to establish the MP's cause of death;
 - b) Urges the Congolese authorities to show greater transparency by sending a copy of the legal investigation report, with all the relevant elements, as well as the conclusions of the international teams, to the National Assembly and to the Committee as soon as possible in order to establish the truth in this case;
 - c) Considers that, given the allegations concerning his death and the doubts that remain about the prosecutor's conclusions concerning the cause of his death, the National Assembly, as the guardian of human rights, could have taken concrete steps to preserve

the integrity of parliament by joining Mr. Okende's family in bringing a civil action in order to gain access to the legal investigation report in its entirety;

- d) Is pleased at the National Assembly's willingness to facilitate and welcome a mission of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to the DRC under the best possible conditions in order to meet the Congolese authorities, in particular the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Justice, and gain access to the reports of the legal investigation, the autopsy and the reports of the international teams who assisted the Congolese Public Prosecutor's Office;
 - e) Considers it essential that the delegation also meets with Mr. Okende's family and lawyers and relevant third parties; and hopes that the National Assembly will facilitate all these meetings during the Committee's mission;
 - f) Requests the Secretary General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.
237. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo

238. The alleged human rights violations are lack of fair trial proceedings, right of appeal, arbitrary invalidation of the election of a parliamentarian and other acts obstructing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate.

Case Summary

239. On 20th December 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) held general elections against a background of disruption, malfunctioning, violence and accusations of attempted fraud. A number of voices among the opposition and observers condemned the chaotic legislative elections, the outcome of which would only inflame the political tensions in the country.
240. On 13th January 2024, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) published the provisional results of the legislative elections. Prior to the publication of the results, the CENI had issued a decision invalidating 82 candidacies for electoral fraud and other unlawful acts. Following the announcement of the provisional results and in view of the numerous incidents that occurred during the elections, more than 1,000 appeals were lodged with the Constitutional Court to rule on the electoral dispute.
241. It is against this background that this collective complaint is being filed, which includes the case of 15 MPs who are among a group of members who were not declared elected by the CENI on 13th January 2024. Following appeals lodged with the Constitutional Court,

the latter validated their election in its ruling of 12th March 2024. The National Assembly was notified of their final election, and the 15 members of parliament were able to take their seats in the Assembly to exercise their parliamentary mandate. However, on 22nd April 2024, the same Constitutional Court that had ruled on the final election of these MPs handed down a new ruling following so-called “rectification of material error” proceedings, which took place on 15th April 2024 and during which the complainants were neither informed of the appeals lodged nor invited to a hearing.

242. In the ruling of 22nd April 2024, the Court invalidated the mandate of the 15 MPs in favour of other individuals, some of whom had not even been candidates in the legislative elections. The Court overturned its decision, which is supposedly not subject to appeal under Article 168 of the Constitution and Article 74(2) of the Electoral Law amended on 29 June 2022. In the operative part of this new ruling, the Court fails to explain how it reached a conclusion that was opposite to the one it had reached in March 2024. Moreover, according to the complainants, the ruling of 22nd April, 2024 was handed down outside the two-month statutory period allowed for the Court to rule on electoral disputes.
243. According to Article 74 of Law No. 22/029 of 29 June 2022, “the time limit for examining disputes arising from legislative, provincial, urban, communal and local elections is two months from the date of referral to the competent courts”. Article 74 of the same law stipulates that “a material error has no effect on the decision, except in the case of a proven inaccuracy in the figures mentioned in the contested ruling or a transcription error”.
244. The law of 29th June 2022 was adopted by the National Assembly in order to remedy the electoral disputes that arose during the 2019 legislative elections. However, despite the proactive measures taken by the Congolese legislature, the Constitutional Court appears to have transgressed this law. In addition to the Constitutional Court's ruling of 22nd April 2024, which was deemed unfair by the complainants, the latter has also raised irregularities in the functioning of the said court.
245. Among the 9 members of the Constitutional Court appointed on 7th July 2014 for a non-renewable nine-year term and sworn in on 4 April 2015, two of them, judges Corneille Wasenda and Jean Pierre Mavungu, reportedly continued to sit even though their term of office ended on 4th April 2024, while judge Norbert Nkulu was said to be unavailable and no longer sitting. According to Article 6 of Organic Law No. 13/026 of 15 October 2013 on the organization and functioning of the Constitutional Court, “the term of office of the members of the Court is nine years. It is not renewable.” Similarly, Article 158(3) of the Constitution states that “the non-renewable term of office of the members of the Constitutional Court is nine years”. Thus, according to the complainants, the procedure followed, which led to the adoption of the aforementioned ruling in April 2024, was also contrary to the law, given that the terms of office of two of its judges had expired.
246. This complaint also concerns the situation of Ms. Magguy Kiala Bolenga Boley, whose candidacy was reportedly rejected by the CENI in favour of a male candidate belonging to the majority in her single seat constituency, even though she had obtained more votes than him. Ms. Boley is said to have lodged two appeals with the Constitutional Court, and

although the transcript of the voting results attests to her victory, the Court declared her applications admissible but unfounded. Mr. Pascal Manshimba and Mr. Robert Koloba are another case in point. They were declared elected by the CENI, but their election was invalidated by the Constitutional Court in favour of another candidate from the majority.

247. In its ruling of 12th March 2024, the Court accused Mr. Manshimba of electoral fraud, an allegation that he has consistently denied. As for Mr. Koloba, he was invalidated following a petition to contest that was allegedly not brought to his attention. His election was invalidated by the same court ruling of 12th March 2024 in favour of another candidate whose list had obtained more votes.
248. At the 149th IPU Assembly, the Committee was able to exchange views with the Congolese parliamentary authorities and the complainants involved in this case. The delegation pointed out that, in the context of electoral disputes, Constitutional Court rulings could be overturned in the event of material errors and that this was the case of the second court ruling adopted in April 2024.
249. Due to the other cases in the DRC on the agenda and examined by the Committee during this session, including the cases of Mr. Chérubin Okende and Mr. Jean-Marc Kabund, the Committee was unable to discuss this complaint further with the Congolese delegation. Nevertheless, the Committee has been inviting the National Assembly to provide information in writing on this complaint since its receipt by the Committee in May 2024, but the parliamentary authorities have failed to send a reply in this regard.
250. The delegation reiterated the openness of the parliamentary authorities to facilitating and hosting a mission by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians in connection with several cases examined by it. As for its meeting with the complainants, the Committee noted that the former had exhausted all possible remedies in the DRC. The complainants also stated that when the Constitutional Court had validated their mandate in March 2024, they had been sworn in before the National Assembly, which had also declared them elected, and they had begun to effectively exercise their parliamentary mandate.
251. Furthermore, when the Court invalidated their election in April 2024, the National Assembly immediately implemented this ruling by stopping their emoluments, but without adopting a decision ending their parliamentary mandate. The MPs, therefore, consider that their mandate is still valid since no decision has been taken by the National Assembly to remove them from office.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

252. The Committee held as follows:
 - a) Deeply regrets the repetitive nature of complaints of this kind before the Committee concerning electoral disputes, a recurring problem in the DRC and one that has been highlighted to the Congolese authorities for a number of years; and recalls in this regard

that similar challenges marred the 2006, 2011 and 2018 elections and that several MPs were invalidated in the same circumstances following rulings by the Constitutional Court rectifying material error;

- b) Stresses that Constitutional Court rulings rectifying material errors cannot call into question *res judicata*; and fails to understand how the second Constitutional Court ruling adopted on 22nd April 2024, which appears to have been adopted outside the legal time limit of two months under Article 74 of Law No. 22/029 of 29 June 2022, was able to amend the list of MPs initially validated by the same court a few weeks earlier. Wishes to receive further clarification from the competent authorities on this point in particular, as well as on the composition and functioning of the Constitutional Court;
- c) Deplores that the initiative taken by the Congolese legislature in adopting the law of 29th June 2022 and amending Article 74 thereof, which stipulates that the rulings of the Constitutional Court are not subject to appeal, has not been respected;
- d) Calls on the authorities to ensure consistency and transparency in the application of the laws adopted and to carry out appropriate legislative and constitutional reforms to put an end to the recurrence of such violations and improve the mechanisms for settling electoral disputes;
- e) Reaffirms the IPU's willingness to provide technical assistance to the Parliament of the DRC to this end, welcomes the willingness of the National Assembly to facilitate and host a mission of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to the DRC under the best possible conditions; and
- f) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

253. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17 October 2024)

(v) **Eswatini**

254. Alleged human rights violations are arbitrary arrest and detention, inhuman conditions of detention, lack of due process at the investigation stage, lack of fair proceedings, excessive delays, violation of freedom of opinion and expression and violation of freedom of assembly and association.

Case Summary

255. Parliamentarians **Mr. Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza** and **Mr. Mthandeni Dube** were arrested on 25th July 2021. A third parliamentarian, **Mr Mduduzi Simelane**, fled the country before

the arrest warrant, which still remains valid, was implemented. Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube were charged with the contravention of section 5(1), read in conjunction with section (2)(2)(a)-(d) and (i) of the Suppression of Terrorism Act 2008 (as amended), two alternative counts under the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1938, and two counts of murder. The Accused No. 1 was in addition, charged with contravention of regulation 4(3)(b), read in conjunction with regulation 4(8) of the Disaster Management Act, No. 1 of 2006. They each entered a plea of not guilty in respect of all charges. The accused made several bail applications, which were all rejected.

256. The legal action against the MPs was taken in the following context: In May 2021, calls for political reform started circulating on various platforms across Eswatini, with the aforementioned three MPs also advocating for these changes. To prove that these MPs had the mandate from their constituencies to make this call resulted in a series of petitions being delivered to parliament in support of the call for change. Protesters were calling for constitutional and political reforms, lamenting the Government's reported failure to deliver basic services to its citizens, demanding responses to socioeconomic challenges, and invoking alleged ill-treatment by police.
257. Petitions were delivered to various *tinkhundla* centres (constituencies), predominantly by young people to their MPs as an endorsement of the call for constitutional and political reforms. These calls were heightened during protests against alleged "police brutality" following the death of a University of Eswatini law student, Mr. Thabani Nkomonye. On 24th June 2021, the then acting Prime Minister, Mr. Themba N. Masuku, issued a ban on the delivery of these petitions, saying that this was "a conscious decision to maintain the rule of law and de-escalate tensions that had turned the exercise into violence and disorder".
258. Protesters continued to deliver petitions in spite of the ban and were blocked by the police. The parliamentary authorities state that numerous acts of violence were reported during the delivery of petitions, which were orchestrated by the protesters in some of the constituencies. This led to the authorities banning the physical delivery of petitions to the constituencies but leaving the door open for the petitions to be sent by e-mail.
259. In its report released at the very end of June 2021 regarding the events that had occurred earlier that month, the Eswatini Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration found that human rights violations and abuses were perpetrated during the unrest. According to the complainant, the charges against Mr. Mabuza, Mr. Dube and, potentially, Mr. Simelane serve as reprisals and aim to silence them, given that they have been at the forefront of the aforesaid demands for democratic reforms in Eswatini, an absolute monarchy led by King Mswati III for over 30 years, where political parties are not legally recognized.
260. The parliamentary authorities deny that they have been targeted for exercising their freedom of expression. Mr. Rahim Khan, an Attorney and former acting Chief Magistrate in Botswana, with over 40 years of legal experience, was appointed by the IPU to attend and follow the final trial proceedings against Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube which took place from 8th to 10th and 14th to 16th November and on 13th December 2022.

261. On 31st January 2023, the defence and the Crown Prosecutor made final submissions in the criminal proceedings against Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube, after which the judge in the case reserved judgment. On 1st June 2023, the Judge found them guilty of all charges, except for the charge related to the COVID-19 regulations with respect to Mr. Mabuza, and reserved sentencing for a hearing in December 2023. This hearing was subsequently postponed, with new hearings that took place from 20th to 22nd February and on 26th March 2024.
262. The IPU trial observer attended all these hearings, which focused on the defence counsel presenting information in support of mitigating the parliamentarians' sentence. According to information provided by the authorities at the hearing held on 26 March 2024, Mr. Dube and Mr. Mabuza were not ready to proceed and applied for a postponement to 30th April 2024. This application was granted by the court.
263. In his most recent report, the IPU trial observer upon reviewing the verdict stated that "if we examine the statements attributed to them (Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube) by the learned judge, a careful analysis in fact does not reflect criminal intent. Throughout the evidence as appears in the record, there is no exhortation on the Swazi public to rise up in insurrection, overthrow the Monarchy and establish a government of the people. In fact, the accused are very deferential towards the Monarchy almost religiously so.
264. The entire case rests on the response by the accused to the declaration by the government that it was banning the production of petitions and for the appointment of the Prime Minister by-election. The incidents of civil unrest occurred on 24th June 2021. It is abundantly clear from the gravamen of the charges that the accused were in no way near the scene of the crime. It is the effect of what they stated that reflects what the State says is the foundation of their criminal conduct: that they encouraged people in their public statements to disobey the lawful appointment of the Prime Minister and in the process encouraged civil disobedience. There was no armed insurrection, no taking up of arms with revolutionary slogans against the State and no intentional destruction of the most visible manifestations of state power.
265. On 15th July, 2024, the Judge in the case sentenced Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube to prison terms of 25 and 18 years, respectively. They have appealed the sentence, and the appeal is pending. According to the complainant, on 22 September 2022, the two detained parliamentarians were assaulted by prison guards who entered their cells. It is alleged that on 29th September 2023, Mr. Mabuza was again beaten by a correctional services officer. At the hearing held with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians during the 148th IPU Assembly, the Eswatini delegation provided an undated document containing information on an internal inquiry that showed that there was never an assault on Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube.
266. The IPU has expressed several times the wish to send a delegation from the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to Eswatini. However, this mission could not take place in the absence of cooperation from the Eswatini authorities. In his letter of 5th August

2024, the Speaker stated that the rationale for the mission had now been overtaken by events. On the night of 21st January 2023, Eswatini human rights defender and lawyer Mr. Thulani Maseko – a lawyer previously representing both parliamentarians was killed. United Nations and African Union experts immediately condemned the killing as “abhorrent” and demanded an impartial investigation.

267. Mr. Maseko was a member of Lawyers for Human Rights Swaziland and chairperson of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, a coalition of political opposition groups and civil society activists calling for constitutional reform in Eswatini. His murder remains unresolved to this day.
268. At the hearing held with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians during the 148th IPU Assembly in March 2024, the Eswatini delegation stated that an investigation was ongoing. Since the protests broke out in Eswatini in 2021, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other international partners have strongly encouraged the Eswatini authorities to conduct a meaningful, substantive and inclusive national dialogue to discuss options for democratic and institutional reforms.
269. At the hearing held with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians during the 148th IPU Assembly, the Eswatini delegation stated that the national dialogue had since been concluded and had been very successful and that the relevant ministries were now tasked with adopting the corresponding implementation plans. At the same hearing, the Eswatini delegation stated that the IPU trial observer was not impartial as their national justice system was intact and proper and that the judge who ruled on the case was very experienced and had taken all relevant facts into account.
270. The delegation averred that Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube have the right to appeal the verdict and said that the charges against them concerned events that took place when Eswatini was very much in lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations being in place and that in the course of the events in 2021, the lives of more than 30 people had been lost. The delegation also said that if, Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube had been genuinely interested in pushing for the direct election of the Prime Minister, they should have chosen to achieve this outcome through their work in Parliament, rather than by interacting with citizens outside parliament and inciting them to violence.

The Committee’s decision and recommendation to the IPU’s Governing Council

280. The Committee held and recommended as follows:
 - a) Is deeply concerned that Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube have been sentenced to hefty prison terms as a result of a trial that the IPU, through its trial observer, closely followed and reported on; considers that the Speaker’s latest letter does not dispel its concerns about the trial’s shortcomings as identified in the trial observer’s reports; fails to understand, in light of the written judgment that the Committee has carefully reviewed, how the two men could have been convicted and sentenced on the serious charges they faced given that they were only publicly expressing their

opinion on alleged incidents of corruption, the need to change the Constitution and the importance of Eswatini citizens being allowed to convey their views to their representatives in parliament; considers in this regard that the two parliamentarians felt frustration at the lack of willingness and freedom within parliament, largely due to the way it was set up, to make progress on these questions; considers also that, while acknowledging that some of the protests in the middle of 2021 turned violent, at no point did Mr. Mabuza or Mr. Dube advocate for the use of violence or were themselves involved in any violent acts; and decides to send a trial observer to follow and report on the appeal proceedings;

- b) Reaffirms its belief that it is crucial that a delegation of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians can meet with Mr. Mabuza and Mr. Dube in detention and requests the IPU Secretary-General to continue to engage with the parliamentary authorities of Eswatini to dispatch this mission as soon as possible;
- c) Reiterates the IPU's readiness to provide support for ongoing efforts to implement the recommendations that arose from the national dialogue and wishes to receive more information on these recommendations and their state of implementation, including in the area of political and democratic reforms;
- d) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the Speaker of the House of Assembly, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information, in particular the SADC, the African Union and the Parliament of South Africa;
- e) Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

281. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17 October 2024)

(vi) Guinea-Bissau

282. The alleged human rights violations are abduction, threats, acts of intimidation, lack of due process at the investigation stage, violation of freedom of opinion and expression, violation of freedom of assembly and association, violation of freedom of movement, arbitrary invalidation of the election of a parliamentarian, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate, failure to respect parliamentary immunity and other acts obstructing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate.

Case Summary

283. The present case concerns the situation of four members of the People's National Assembly of Guinea-Bissau, including its Speaker, **Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, Mr. Marciano Indi, Mr. Agnelo Regalla and Mr. Bamba Banjai**, who have suffered human rights

violations since 2020 for publicly criticizing the President of the Republic, Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Nuno Gomes Nabiam.

284. On 23rd May 2020, Mr. Marciano Indi, leader of the parliamentary group the United People's Alliance Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau (Alliance du Peuple Uni-Parti Démocratique de Guinée Bissau) (APU-PDGB), was abducted by individuals whom he identified as belonging to the National Guard, a security force that is under the authority and political auspices of the Ministry of the Interior.
285. Shortly before his abduction, Mr. Indi had questioned the President's policy and calls to replace the opposition head of government. Mr. Indi was beaten up, insulted and ill-treated by his kidnapers. The MP nevertheless attempted to negotiate his release after overhearing a telephone conversation between one of the kidnapers and the Minister for Interior. Mr. Indi was taken to the Ministry of the Interior, where he was placed in a cell for a few hours. According to the allegations, Mr. Indi had the opportunity to speak to the Interior Minister, who allegedly told him that everything would be resolved and begged him not to divulge anything to the media about what had happened.
286. The MP was then taken by his kidnapers to the house of the former Speaker of Parliament, where he was released. He was escorted back to his home by the former Speaker of Parliament. Having heard the telephone conversations between his kidnapers and the Minister of the Interior, as well as those between the former Speaker of Parliament and the President of the Republic, Mr. Indi understood that his kidnapping had been ordered by President Embaló and that he would receive no compensation for the harm he had suffered.
287. Regarding Mr. Agnelo Regalla, he was shot outside his home on 7th May 2022 by uniformed armed men. Seriously injured, he was evacuated to Portugal for specialist medical treatment. The incident occurred the day after a press conference held at the headquarters of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), during which President Embaló's regime had been heavily criticised. The investigation opened by the judicial police was never completed.
288. On 3rd February 2024, Mr. Bamba Banjai, a member of the parliamentary group MADEM-G15, to which the President of the Republic belongs, was arrested along with other supporters of his party by the Secretary of State for Public Order at Bissau airport while awaiting the arrival of his party's leader.
289. According to the complainant, the Secretary of State for Public Order was joined by several heavily armed police officers who took him and the aforementioned other supporters to the Ministry of the Interior, where they were questioned and detained until 9 p.m. On 27th February 2024, after spending a few days in hiding due to serious death threats and attempts to re-arrest him, Mr. Banjai reportedly went to the Ministry of the Interior with his lawyer. On arrival, he was allegedly subjected to intense interrogation for criticizing the regime during a press conference organized by the leaders of his political party. At 9 p.m., Mr. Banjai was allegedly taken to the Presidential Palace and continued to be questioned by President Embaló, who then ordered his release.

290. Concerning the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira was arbitrarily deprived of his parliamentary mandate following the decision of the President of the Republic on 4th December 2023 ordering the dissolution of parliament following the legislative elections of 4th June 2023 on the grounds of an alleged coup d'état, the existence of which the opposition denies.
291. According to the complainant, President Embaló's decision was prompted by the intervention of members of the National Guard to release two opposition ministers while they were being questioned by the judicial police. Clashes broke out between elements of the National Guard and the Presidential Guard Special Forces, resulting in at least two deaths. President Embaló reportedly decided to dissolve parliament after the security forces intervened on behalf of the two opposition ministers. Following the dissolution of parliament, the military reportedly used excessive force to prevent MPs from accessing the National Assembly's premises and holding their meetings.
292. The operating budget of the People's National Assembly, approved in plenary session was frozen on the orders of President Embaló. According to the complainant, President Embaló's decision to dissolve parliament is contrary to the Constitution, which prohibits the dissolution of parliament within 12 months of its inauguration as per Article 94 of the Constitution. The complainant accuses the President of the Republic of seeking to disrupt the functioning of parliament and change its current composition, which is dominated by the opposition.
293. During a hearing before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at the 148th IPU Assembly in March 2024, the parliamentary delegation of Guinea-Bissau, led by the Speaker of the National Assembly, thanked the Committee for its interest and for its invitation to a hearing. The Speaker of Parliament acknowledged the many difficulties his country had faced in achieving political stability. Regarding the cases under examination by the Committee, the Speaker explained that they were related to the November 2019 presidential elections, which had resulted in the disputed victory of President Embaló.
294. In February 2020, Mr. Embaló had ended the PAIGC-led government by appointing a new prime minister. In October 2021, a coup d'état had reportedly been foiled, as well as a second attempt in February 2022. In May 2022, the President had decided to dissolve parliament resulting from the March 2019 legislative elections and scheduled new elections for December 2022. In the end, these were not held until June 2023. The delegation of Guinea-Bissau explained that the legislative elections in June 2023 represented a glimmer of hope and an opportunity for political parties to end their differences. The PAIGC-led opposition came first with 54 of the 102 seats in parliament.
295. According to the delegation, despite the different political opinions, parliament was functioning and an understanding seemed to be developing between the opposition and the majority, heralding a new era of political stability in the country. The delegation therefore questioned the reasons behind President Embaló's dissolution of Parliament. In addition, the delegation pointed out that, from a constitutional point of view, the dissolution

contravenes Article 94 of the Constitution and the relevant rules on the matter because, if the President had valid reasons for dissolving parliament, he would have to present them to parliament and its standing committee, which would have to examine them. These provisions had not been adhered to.

296. According to the delegation, the political instability and arbitrary measures taken by President Embaló, including the dissolution of parliament, the dismissal of the President of the Supreme Court and several of its members, and the lack of independence of the Prosecutor General, facilitate human rights violations in Guinea-Bissau. Anyone who dares to criticise the President may find themselves kidnapped, roughed up and detained before being released without justice being done.
297. The delegation reiterated that the opposition of all the political parties and public opinion to the dissolution of parliament was not a choice but a necessity, given that the absence of a parliament and of all the institutions guaranteeing the rule of law in Guinea-Bissau could lead to a disastrous situation in the country. The parliamentary delegation said that the only way out of the crisis was for parliamentary functions to resume and for there to be a gradual return to the rule of law.
298. On the eve of the hearing, the delegation received information that the President of the Republic might be on the verge of reaching such a conclusion, as the Prime Minister had reportedly announced the withdrawal of military forces from parliament. In their letter of 3rd April 2024, the executive authorities called into question three elements:
 - a) the unconstitutional nature of the dissolution of the Assembly could only be judged by the Supreme Court of Justice instead of the Constitutional Court;
 - b) the events that led to the dissolution of parliament were the result of the denunciation by MPs of a substantial payment to contractors; and
 - c) the decision by the Speaker of the Assembly to order the release of the two members of the government questioned in connection with this payment and his plan to release other detainees of the putsch of 1 February 2022.
299. In the same letter of 3rd April 2024, the executive authorities also denounced Mr. Pereira's mobilization of several members of his coalition to cause disorder in front of the Assembly building. Finally, as regards the human rights violations of the MPs included in this case, the executive authorities did not provide any relevant information. On 31st July 2024, the Public Prosecutor issued a public notice ordering Mr. Pereira to report to his office by 15th August 2024 in connection with a corruption case dating back to 2015. The Prosecutor accused Mr. Pereira of fleeing from justice and the National Assembly of not lifting his parliamentary immunity.
300. After several months in exile, Mr. Pereira returned to Guinea-Bissau where he convened an extraordinary session with the parliamentary parties on 20 September 2024 under Article 48 of Law 1/2010 to examine and deliberate on several issues approved by the Bureau. During this meeting, the Standing Committee reiterated that the dissolution of the Assembly was unconstitutional and took a number of decisions aimed at strengthening the

prerogatives of the Assembly, promoting the independence of the judiciary and improving dialogue with the President of the Republic. Following this meeting, the military forces allegedly again occupied the Assembly premises, denying access to Mr. Pereira and all the MPs who took part in the sitting on 20th September. Mr. Pereira was accused of a coup d'état and was replaced by the Second Deputy Speaker of the Assembly, who is close to President Embaló.

301. During the 149th IPU Assembly in Geneva, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Domingos Simoes Pereira was prevented by the customs authorities from leaving Guinea-Bissau to attend the work of the IPU Assembly. A two-person delegation was nevertheless able to represent him and discuss his situation with the Committee, as well as the political context in the country.
302. According to the delegation, the National Assembly faced institutional challenges that prevented it from playing its role in an effective manner. Both its dissolution which is considered unconstitutional by all its MPs and the lack of independence of the Supreme Court, which is under the control of the President of the Republic, impede the work of the National Assembly, according to the delegation, and contribute to a resurgence of human rights violations against all its MPs in particular its Speaker.
303. The delegation averred that the violations of the Speaker's freedom of expression and assembly and the undue invalidation of his mandate were compounded by the violation of his free movement, since he was henceforth banned from travelling. The delegation said that Mr. Pereira had been on the point of boarding a plane destined for Geneva to attend IPU meetings and represent the Guinea-Bissau Parliament when an official from the customs authorities informed him that he did not have the right to leave the country. This travel ban was not established in any legal document that could be contested before the courts. This decision sets a new precedent in the country, as it is the first time that the Speaker of the National Assembly has been prevented from travelling in the absence of a legal ban.
304. The delegation also confirmed that Mr. Pereira had been officially removed from his functions as Speaker of the National Assembly by an official from the Ministry of the Interior, who had assigned this role to the Second Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. Furthermore, in the context of the forthcoming legislative elections scheduled in Guinea-Bissau for 24th November 2024, the President of the Republic has reportedly established a committee to ban certain people, including Mr. Pereira and the president of the MADEM party, from participating in future elections. According to the delegation, Mr. Pereira is already disqualified, as he has not received an essential document to validate his candidature.
305. The delegation also expressed doubt that the elections would be held on the scheduled date in the absence of crucial institutions to guarantee free and fair elections. They said that the Supreme Court did not have a quorum and was under the control of the President of the Republic and that the national electoral commission was not operational as the National

Assembly had not been able to elect its members in 2022 because of the Assembly's first dissolution.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

306. The Committee held and recommended as follows:

- a) Deplores the new violations suffered by Mr. Pereira, in particular the violation of his rights to freedom of expression, assembly and movement, the undue invalidation of both his parliamentary mandate and his function as Speaker of the National Assembly and the blocking of his future candidacy in the legislative elections for purely political reasons;
- b) Urges the relevant authorities in Guinea-Bissau to end the abuse inflicted on Mr. Pereira and to refrain from instrumentalising the justice system with the aim of removing him from political life;
- c) Expresses concern regarding future legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau being held in a climate likely to encourage new violations against opposition MPs, in the alleged absence of an independent judiciary capable of protecting the rights of parliamentarians;
- d) Calls on the relevant authorities in the country to take all necessary measures to guarantee the fundamental rights of all parliamentarians, including the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, in order to guarantee that political debate reflects all opinions, including those that criticize the President of the Republic and government policy;
- e) Regrets the lack of concrete replies from the executive authorities in their letter of 3rd April 2024 concerning the abduction of Mr. Indi, the violent attack perpetrated against Mr. Regalla and the arbitrary arrest of Mr. Banjai; deplores the continued absence of serious judicial investigations into these various cases and the failure of the Bissau-Guinean justice system to protect the physical integrity of these parliamentarians and to ensure that their rights are respected, including their right to freedom of expression and assembly; and urges the relevant authorities in Guinea-Bissau to take all necessary steps to carry out serious investigations into these violations in order to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are held responsible;
- f) Remains concerned at the dissolution of the Parliament of Guinea-Bissau, which has seriously impeded its work, has deprived the citizens of Guinea-Bissau of political representation and continues to affect the individual rights of MPs, including the Speaker;
- g) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant

information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

307. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(vii) Nicaragua

308. Alleged human rights violations were enforced disappearance, threats, acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, inhumane conditions of detention, lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, violation of freedom of opinion and expression, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate and failure to respect parliamentary immunity.

Case Summary

309. In April 2023, Mr Brooklyn Rivera Bryan, a Miskitu Indigenous leader, a prominent member of the YATAMA organization *Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka*, "Children of Mother Earth United" and elected member of Nicaragua's National Assembly, participated in the 22nd session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. During this event, he denounced the treatment of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in Nicaragua. Upon attempting to return to his country on 24th April 2023, the Nicaraguan Government allegedly blocked his entry.
310. After a few days abroad, Mr. Rivera Bryan returned to Nicaragua, where he was reportedly persecuted by the national police. According to the information received, on 29th September 2023, state agents forcibly entered his home, roughed him up and arrested him without a warrant. His whereabouts have remained unknown since then. According to the complainant, his family has been denied any information, leading to growing concerns about his health and safety, especially given his pre-existing health conditions, which require specialized medical attention. The complainant also states that Mr. Rivera Bryan's family faces continued threats, intimidation and some family members have been forced into exile.
311. Ms. Nancy Elizabeth Henríquez James, also a Miskitu indigenous leader and member of the YATAMA organization, took over Mr. Rivera Bryan's parliamentary seat in April 2023 as his alternate. The complainant alleges that she was arrested by undercover police officers on 1st October 2023. Her whereabouts remained unknown for approximately two months. On 13th December 2023, Ms. Henríquez James was sentenced to eight years in prison during a trial held within the women's prison "La Esperanza", where she was allegedly denied legal representation, an interpreter, and due process.
312. It appears that the conviction comes in response to Ms. Henríquez James having been charged with the crimes of "undermining national integrity" and "spreading fake news to the detriment of the Nicaraguan State and society". Her family has expressed concern about Ms. Henríquez James' health, considering that she suffers from several chronic health

conditions that require specialised medical attention. The complainant claims that what happened to both parliamentarians is a direct consequence of their actions as indigenous leaders in opposition to the current government and their opposition parliamentary work, and that there is no basis for any criminal charges against them.

313. The complainant also reported that, to date, Mr. Rivera Bryan and Ms. Henríquez James have not been the subject of any procedure for the termination of their term of office in parliament. However, both have been removed from the list of members of the National Assembly. The IPU formally requested information and official comments from the National Assembly regarding this case in April and September 2024. Parliament has not submitted any information to date.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

314. The Committee held as follows:

- a) Regrets the lack of response from the Nicaraguan parliamentary authorities to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians' repeated requests for information and official observations regarding the situation of Mr. Rivera Bryan and Ms. Henríquez James; recalls in this regard that, in accordance with its Rules and Practices, the Committee does everything possible to promote dialogue with national authorities, and primarily with parliaments, with a view to reaching a satisfactory settlement in the cases before it;
- b) Encourages in this regard the National Assembly of Nicaragua to enter into a constructive and continuous dialogue with the Committee in order to ensure a satisfactory and speedy resolution of this case;
- c) Is alarmed that, on 29th September 2023, state agents reportedly entered Mr. Rivera Bryan's home by force, mistreated him and arrested him without a warrant, that Mr. Rivera Bryan's whereabouts have remained unknown since then and that the Nicaraguan authorities have not provided any official information on the place and conditions of his detention; considers that the national authorities have an obligation to spare no effort to shed light on the fate of Mr. Rivera Bryan by means of a thorough investigation, that they should start the search immediately and expeditiously and that the search should continue until his whereabouts have been established with certainty; stresses,
- d) Is concerned that Mr. Rivera Bryan's arrest appears to be linked to his parliamentary activities as an opposition MP and indigenous leader, and that it took place after he had raised the issue of the situation of indigenous peoples and Afro descendants in Nicaragua at the 22nd session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York;
- e) Is concerned about the continued detention of Ms. Henríquez James, given the worrying allegations about her deteriorating health and lack of access to medical care;

recalls that the State of Nicaragua has a heightened duty of care to take all necessary measures to protect Ms. Henríquez James's life, since by arresting her it has assumed responsibility for her life and physical integrity; urges, in this regard, the competent authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment of Ms. Henríquez James's rights, including the urgent provision of appropriate medical treatment;

- f) Requests the competent Nicaraguan authorities to keep it informed of any measures taken in this regard;
- g) Expresses concern at the allegations of serious violations of the right to a fair trial in the legal proceedings against Ms. Henríquez James; and calls on the competent authorities to provide official and detailed information on the facts justifying each of the charges brought against Ms. Henríquez James and on the current state of her case;
- h) Stresses that attacks and threats against the life and security of parliamentarians as well as any reprisals for carrying out their work, if left unpunished, violate, inter alia, their rights to life, security and freedom of expression and undermine their ability to exercise their parliamentary mandate, affecting the ability of parliament as an institution to fulfil its role; considers that the National Assembly of Nicaragua has a direct responsibility to ensure that every effort is made by all relevant authorities to investigate thoroughly and diligently the many concerns that have emerged in this case and to identify and punish those responsible for the human rights violations allegedly perpetrated against two of its members;
- i) Wishes to be kept informed of action taken by parliament in this respect; Is concerned at the allegation that both Mr. Rivera Bryan and Ms. Henríquez James have been removed from the list of members of the National Assembly without being the subject of any procedure; and wishes to receive official information on the steps taken by parliament, if any, to terminate the parliamentary mandate of the two parliamentarians and the legal basis for doing so;
- j) Requests the Committee to send a delegation to Nicaragua as soon as possible so as to meet with all authorities exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, as well as the relevant prison authorities and any other institution, civil society organization or individual in a position to provide relevant information in the present case;
- k) Tasks the delegation with visiting Ms. Henríquez James in prison; and sincerely hopes that the competent national authorities will cooperate fully and that the mission will help to swiftly find satisfactory solutions to this case in accordance with applicable national and international human rights standards;
- l) Calls on all national parliaments, IPU permanent observers, relevant human rights organisations and the international community, in general, to take urgent and concrete action to help resolve this case in a manner consistent with human rights values and within the boundaries of the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs;

m) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the National Assembly of Nicaragua, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information or contribute to the solution of the case; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

315. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(viii) Pakistan

316. The alleged human rights violations are; enforced disappearance, torture, ill-treatment and other acts of violence, threats, acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, inhumane conditions of detention, lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, violation of freedom of opinion and expression, violation of freedom of assembly and association, violation of freedom of movement, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate, failure to respect parliamentary immunity, impunity, right to privacy, gender-based discrimination and right to take part in the conduct of public affairs.

Case summary

317. The case concerns five parliamentarians from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party who, according to the complainant, have been persecuted as a result of their opposition to the military authorities of Pakistan following a vote of no confidence that ousted Mr. Imran Khan's government on 14th April 2022. The complainant reports that, since then, the authorities have interfered with the demonstrations organized by Mr. Khan by arresting thousands of PTI members and banning rallies over vaguely defined security concerns. The complainant reports that protesters were frequently met with disproportionate use of force, which left Ms. Kanwal Shauzab with long-term injuries.

318. Ms. Shauzab's complaints regarding the damage she sustained and the threats to leave politics that followed were not acted upon. The complainant submits that what followed was a campaign of escalating violations against Mr. Khan and PTI MPs who remained loyal to him, violations that remain unpunished to this day.

319. On 13th October 2022, Senator Azam Swati was abducted by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), tortured and arbitrarily detained following a tweet criticizing the outgoing chief of staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa. On 26th November 2022, Mr. Swati was arrested by the FIA again hours after posting a tweet criticizing Mr. Bajwa and detained at an undisclosed location, raising fears that he was the victim of enforced disappearance. However, after a campaign to secure his release by a number of parliamentarians, he was freed on bail on 3 January 2023. The bail order contained a warning, that should Mr. Swati "repeat the offence" the order would be revoked.

320. A trial observer mandated by the IPU travelled to Islamabad on 23rd July 2023 to follow the trial in absentia of Mr. Swati and prepared a report based on the information provided by the state attorneys and his lawyer. According to the report, his arrest and detention "may

be described as a punishment for his exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and opinion". The trial observer also concluded that judicial and executive authorities interpret the relevant laws in such a way that no citizen is allowed to criticize the army". In addition, the report expressed concern at the use of multiple charges for the same occurrence, suggesting that the motive of that practice was to keep him in custody.

321. On 4th November 2022, Mr. Khan was shot and wounded while leading a peaceful protest. The complainant alleges that the gun attack was one of several assassination attempts on Mr. Khan and reports that these incidents were never properly investigated. The complainant stresses that Mr. Khan's complaints to the police against General Asim Munir and Director General of Counter Intelligence Faisal Naseer have remained unregistered ever since, despite the intervention of the Supreme Court instructing the authorities to do so and to investigate the murder attempt. According to the complainant, following a deadly police raid on Mr. Khan's residence, his supporters were banned from protesting and the media were banned from mentioning Mr. Khan's name.
322. On 9th May 2023, Mr. Khan was arrested on a charge of misdeclaration of the proceeds from the sale of state gifts, prompting mass protests and unrest. Some demonstrations became the scene of violence, as several state and military facilities were targeted by arsonists amid an internet blackout. The violent incidents were staged by the military authorities as part of a false-flag operation to frame Mr. Khan and disintegrate the PTI party. According to the complainant, the authorities were swift in assigning blame to the PTI and unfurled a widespread campaign of violent arrests, killing five PTI activists in the process and detaining over 5,000 people, including Senator Ejaz Chaudhary and Ms. Aliya Hamza Malik, while Ms. Shauzab, Mr. Swati and other PTI MPs went into hiding to avoid further persecution.
323. The complainant adds that dozens of PTI MPs have been intimidated into changing sides or face charges of sedition or terrorism under draconian laws, whereas all PTI members who left the PTI had all their charges dropped immediately. According to the complainant, Mr. Khan was released following a Supreme Court ruling that his arrest was illegal, only to be violently arrested again on 5th August 2023. He was then sentenced in the "state gifts case" to three years in prison, was deprived of his seat and was barred from taking part in elections for five years.
324. Since then, Mr. Khan has faced over 180 charges, including leaking state secrets, corruption, treason and organizing violent protests. On 29 August 2023, the Islamabad High Court suspended his conviction and freed him on bail, yet Mr. Khan remained in prison on the basis of a multitude of other charges. Since then, a succession of court orders acquitting and freeing Mr. Khan were handed down, but Mr. Khan remained in maximum security prisons on the basis of new charges.
325. On 31st January 2024, Mr. Khan and his wife were handed a 14-year prison term, a day after another special court had found Mr. Khan guilty of disclosing state secrets, sentenced him to 10 years' imprisonment and removed his political rights days before the general elections were held. According to the complainant, Mr. Khan is being kept in appalling

conditions, and has been denied adequate medical care and visits from a physician of his choice, raising fears that he is being slowly killed. Since 6th October 2024, Mr. Khan has reportedly been kept in solitary confinement.

326. The complainant also shared concerns regarding the health of Ms. Hamza and Mr. Chaudhary, alleging that they face similar obstructions while they are being held on remand. According to the complainant, their trials are also riddled with violations of due process and excessive delays. Ms. Hamza was eventually released on bail on 7th August 2024.
327. During a hearing with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, a member of the Pakistani delegation to the 147th IPU Assembly indicated that PTI parliamentarians could seek redress by requesting that the parliamentary leadership issue production orders to allow detained parliamentarians to take part in parliamentary sessions. However, the complainant later shared that all production orders delivered were ignored and that the parliamentary authorities stopped requesting such production orders altogether in the months that followed, despite repeated calls to continue doing so.
328. The complainant also alleges that the ruling coalition has supported calls to have Mr. Khan tried in military courts and has sought to ban the PTI. Elections were held in Pakistan on 8th February 2024 after a controversial delay beyond the constitutionally mandated deadline. According to the complainant, the elections were mired in controversy, including a connectivity blackout, accusations of rigging and other instances of arbitrary interference with the voting process, including a ban on the use of the party symbol for the PTI.
329. Nevertheless, the elections resulted in one of the biggest electoral upsets in the history of the country, with over 80 seats going to PTI candidates who had campaigned as independents, ahead of any other party. None of the parliamentarians in the case were able to take part in elections as all of them were either detained or in hiding, with the exception of Ms. Shauzab who faced overwhelming obstacles and threats, as well as an unjustified refusal to accept her election registration papers.
330. In its 27th March 2024 decision, the IPU Governing Council concluded that the rights of the five PTI MPs to take part in the conduct of public affairs had been violated. Following the elections, the issues of administration of justice in Pakistan came to the fore after the publication of an open letter signed by six of the eight judges of the Islamabad High Court on 26th March 2024, accusing Pakistan's security agency of threatening and intimidating them and their relatives through abductions, acts of torture and secret surveillance in an attempt "to engineer judicial outcomes" in cases before the courts, including in cases involving Mr. Imran Khan.
331. The unprecedented letter was addressed to the Supreme Judicial Council and called for "transparent civilian oversight" of the security sector to restore the rule of law. The complainant reports that the letter of protest caused an uproar and was followed by the opening of a commission of inquiry, which is yet to bear fruit due to internal disagreements and reprisals against judges. According to the complainant, in the months that followed,

the ruling coalition initiated discussions on constitutional amendments that were widely criticized as attempts to curb judicial independence and to allow for the trial of civilians by military courts.

332. On 18th June 2024, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that the detention of Mr. Khan was arbitrary and politically motivated. It noted that his arrest lacked a legal basis and appeared to be aimed at disqualifying him from political office. The working group called for his immediate release with compensation and reparations and called for an investigation into numerous violations of due process during his trial. The call for Mr. Khan's release was echoed by Amnesty International, which decried the weaponization of the legal system in Pakistan.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

333. The Committee held and recommended as follows-

- a) Regrets that the delegation of Pakistan to the 149th IPU Assembly cancelled its attendance and was not able to meet with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians as intended and hopes that such a meeting can take place in the future;
- b) Acknowledges that Ms. Aliya Hamza was freed on bail on 7th August 2024 as called for in the Council's decision of 27th March 2024; strongly regrets that Mr. Chaudhary and Mr. Khan remain in detention, despite repeated calls for their release and that the authorities have not provided information on their conditions of detention, despite repeated calls to do so;
- c) Agrees, on the basis of all information at its disposal, with the conclusions of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention that Mr. Khan is being arbitrarily detained; and urges the parliamentary authorities of Pakistan to secure the immediate release of Mr. Khan and Mr. Chaudhary and to ensure that their rights are restored in full;
- d) Remains appalled by the persistent pattern of alleged lack of due process and impunity in cases of parliamentarians in Pakistan; is particularly shocked by allegations that such violations are being used to pressure opposition parliamentarians into changing their allegiance and by reports that only those parliamentarians who have yielded to pressure are relieved from arbitrary actions against them; considers in this regard that parliament has a vested interest and a duty to ensure that the rights of all its members, irrespective of their views or political allegiance, are fully protected and that no affront to their rights and dignity is left unpunished, irrespective of the rank of those perpetrating the violations;
- e) Calls on the Pakistan parliament to establish a commission of enquiry to identify the root causes of the multiple violations in this case;

- f) Urges parliament to restore the rule of law by addressing the root causes that led to the present crisis in the most effective and expedient manner, including through legislative action that would protect the independence of the judiciary, restore respect for due process and put an end to the rampant impunity that has been evident in this case;
- g) Calls on the authorities to make use of the expertise of the United Nations special procedures, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, to ensure that existing legislation is amended so as to comply with relevant international human rights standards and appeals to IPU to provide assistance to the Pakistani authorities in any such legal review;
- h) Is profoundly concerned by the increasingly serious allegations conveyed by the complainant in this case, including allegations of torture, inhumane treatment and arbitrary arrest and detention; and is deeply concerned by information shared by the families of the detained parliamentarians who took part in a hearing with the Committee during its 173rd session in January 2024, including reports of the inhumane conditions of detention of the detained parliamentarians, as well as by the practice of issuing numerous first information reports for the same occurrences with the alleged intention of keeping Mr. Khan and Mr. Chaudhary in prison, even though they had received several judgments ordering their release;
- i) Hopes to be able to rely on the support of parliament in ensuring that the rights of parliamentarians in this case are protected in full, including their right to a fair trial;
- j) Reiterates its wish to be kept informed of the dates of the trial and of any other relevant judicial developments in the case in preparation for an upcoming trial observation mission to Pakistan;
- k) Is convinced that, in light of the aforesaid concerns, a committee mission to Pakistan to discuss the issues at hand directly with all the relevant authorities and other stakeholders is needed more than ever in order to help find swift, satisfactory solutions to these cases in accordance with applicable national and international human rights standards; sincerely hopes, therefore, that the Pakistani authorities will be able to receive this mission as soon as practicable;
- l) Requests in this regard the Secretary-General to engage with the parliamentary authorities of Pakistan with a view to dispatching the mission as soon as possible; and
- m) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.

334. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(ix) Philippines

335. The alleged human rights violations are threats, acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians and violation of freedom of expression and opinion.

Case summary

336. **Ms. Leila de Lima** served as Chairperson of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights from May 2008 to June 2010. In that capacity, she led a series of investigations into alleged extrajudicial killings linked to the “Davao Death Squad” in Davao City, where Mr. Duterte had been long-time mayor and concluded that Mr. Duterte, former President of the Philippines, was behind the Davao Death Squad.
337. Ms. de Lima was appointed Secretary of Justice. She resigned from this position in October 2015 to focus on her campaign for a senate seat in the May 2016 elections, a bid that was successful. In August 2016, as Chair of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights, she launched an inquiry into the killings of thousands of alleged drug users and drug dealers, which had reportedly taken place after President Duterte took office in June 2016. After she was elected to the Senate, she became the target of acts of intimidation and denigration, including by the then President Duterte himself.
338. Ms. de Lima was arrested and detained on 24th February 2017 over accusations of receiving drug money to finance her campaign for a senate seat. The charges, in three different cases, were brought in the wake of an inquiry in 2016 by the House of Representatives into drug trafficking in New Bilibid Prison and Ms. de Lima’s involvement in such trafficking while she was Secretary of Justice. The House-led inquiry was launched one week after she had initiated her inquiry in the Senate into the extrajudicial killings. Since July 2018, Ms. de Lima has been charged in the three cases before Branches 205 and 256 of the Regional Trial Court (RTC), Muntinlupa City.
339. On 17th February 2021, RTC Branch 205 granted Ms. de Lima's objective to evidence in case No. 17-166, technically acquitting her in the absence of sufficient evidence. The complainant points out that during the presentation of the prosecution’s evidence in the first of the two remaining cases (Case No. 17-165), not only was there no physical evidence of the alleged illegal drugs or of the money allegedly delivered to Ms. de Lima as her share of the alleged illegal drug trade, but even the prosecution’s own witnesses, mostly criminals serving sentences in the New Bilibid Prison denied any involvement or even any personal knowledge of the alleged illegal drug trade. Instead, the prosecution spent most of its time attempting to prove the guilt of its own witnesses, including Mr. Peter Co, Mr. Hans Tan and Mr. Vicente Sy, all of whom repeatedly denied any involvement in the illegal drug trade, and whom the prosecution, to this date, has failed to indict as co-conspirators.
340. Conveniently, the only person who was consistently singled out by these witnesses as having personal knowledge of the New Bilibid Prison drug trade and the role of Ms. de Lima died on 26th September 2016. That person, Mr. Tony Co, was an inmate who was

stabbed to death in a staged prison riot that targeted inmates who initially refused to testify against Ms. de Lima before the House of Representatives Justice Committee's hearing on the New Bilibid Prison drug trade.

341. Most importantly, the complainant points out that the prosecution's foremost witness in the case, Mr. Rafael Ragos, former National Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director and former Bureau of Corrections Officer-in-Charge, who had been the sole witness to testify that he had delivered money to Ms. de Lima's house on two occasions, recanted all his testimonies and statements against Ms. de Lima on 30 April 2022. In his retraction, Mr. Ragos said that he had been forced to testify against her by the then Secretary of Justice Vitaliano Aguirre II who had led the witch-hunt against Ms. de Lima in the Philippines' House of Representatives Justice Committee's hearings in 2016.
342. In addition to Mr Ragos, Mr Rodolfo Magleo, a former police officer convicted of kidnapping, and Mr Nonilo Arile, a police asset, also recanted their evidence. In light of these recantations, Case No. 17-165 was concluded on 12 May 2023 with the acquittal of Ms. de Lima. After Mr. Ragos' recantation, and earlier recantations by Mr. Kerwin Espinosa and co-accused former bodyguard Mr. Ronnie Dayan, in the remaining case (Case No. 17-167) two more witnesses for the prosecution recanted their testimony on 16 October 2023. This was done in a letter handed over to Ms. de Lima, and subsequently shared with the court, in which they said that they were "bothered by their consciences" and that they did not want the accused to be the victim of a false trial. The letter also mentioned that five more witnesses would also recant.
343. The complainant underscores that at least two other witnesses, Mr. Joel Capones and Mr. Herbert Colanggo, claim to have engaged in illegal drug trafficking. Despite these admissions made under oath and in open court, the prosecution refused to charge them, whether as co-conspirators in the same case or in a separate case, hence showing according to the complainant and that they stand to benefit from incriminating Ms. de Lima.
344. In the course of 2023, the case was forwarded to Judge Gener Gito of the RTC of Muntinlupa City (Branch 206) after Judge Romeo Buenaventura recused himself from the case. On 13th November 2023, Judge Gito granted Ms. de Lima bail, after which she was released. After running through the testimonies of the primary witnesses, the court stated that the testimonies were unable to clearly establish that conspiracy existed among the accused, including Ms. de Lima to commit illegal drug trading. On 21st March 2024, the defence counsel filed a demurrer to evidence, which, if granted, would amount to an acquittal. On 24th June 2024, Judge Gito cleared Ms. de Lima of the third and last charge by granting the legal motion that technically called for the dismissal of the case.
345. On 30th November 2018, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded, echoing the conclusions of an earlier IPU mission to the Philippines, that Senator de Lima's detention was arbitrary and that her immediate release was in order. Ms. de Lima ran for re-election to the Senate from detention in May 2022 but was not re-elected.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

346. The Committee held and recommended as follows:

- a) Expresses concern that Ms. de Lima spent six and half years in detention as a result of seriously flawed legal proceedings; remains convinced in this regard that the criminal cases brought against Ms. de Lima came in response to her vocal opposition to the way in which the then President Duterte was waging war on drugs, including her denunciation of his alleged responsibility for extrajudicial killings;
- b) Sincerely hopes, therefore, that the relevant Filipino authorities will take the necessary steps to address the underlying concerns that arose in this case, in particular with regard to those relating to the treatment of witnesses and the use of their testimonies, the length of the legal proceedings, respect for the presumption of innocence and the creation of a conducive environment for human rights defenders to carry out their work; and
- c) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities and the complainant.

347. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17 October 2024)

(x) Philippines

348. The alleged human rights violations are arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process at the investigation stage, violation of freedom of opinion and expression, violation of freedom of assembly and association, violation of freedom of movement and failure to respect parliamentary immunity.

Case Summary

349. **Ms. Francisca ("France") Castro** and **Ms. Sarah Jane I. Elago** became members of the Philippines' House of Representatives in 2016. After 2022, only Ms. Castro remains a member of the House of Representatives. The complainants state that in the course of their parliamentary mandates, they have both faced regular harassment due to their opposition to the policies of the then President, Mr. Rodrigo R. Duterte. This alleged intimidation includes being subjected to charges that have no legal or factual merit and that run counter to the individuals' right to a fair trial and to their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and movement.

350. In this regard, the complainants state that Ms. Castro, who stood accused with 17 others, mostly teachers and advocates for the Lumad Indigenous community in Davao del Norte in the Philippines, as well as four pastors, was briefly arrested and detained on the 28th and 29th November 2018.

351. Their first charge against them was for kidnapping, and then the second charge was for other acts of child abuse in connection with the evacuation of 14 Lumad children attending the *Salugpongan Ta' Tanu Igkanogon* Community Learning Center in conflict-ridden Mindanao, where the armed forces, along with the paramilitary group Alamara are fighting against the communist insurgency. It seems that the authorities are claiming that the learning centre operated as a front for the communist insurgency.
352. The prosecution insisted that the crime of “other acts of child abuse” had been committed by the accused, as they accompanied the minors without the assistance and presence of the government law enforcement agency concerned or the written permission and consent of the minors' parents.
353. The complainants stated that Ms. Castro and the other accused rescued the 14 minors from harassment and after the paramilitary group Alamara, in cooperation with the military, forced the teachers and students to leave. In this regard, the teachers led the students on foot on a challenging path from Sitio Dulyan to Sitio Butay where they were collected by Ms. Castro and other members of the National Solidarity Mission. The children's parents reportedly denied that their children had been kidnapped by the accused and said that they had had to leave because the threats were no longer bearable.
354. The complainants also state that the school is situated in a very remote and poor part of the country, that for that reason it served as a boarding school so that the children did not have to walk hours to go to and from school, and that the parents had all signed a special consent form to the school giving it something akin to parental authority. They also say that the school follows the regular curriculum and was in no way working with the rebel National People's Army. Moreover, the parents of the students, who were mostly poor peasants, as well as indigenous leaders in the area, have been pressured by the authorities to cooperate with the criminal proceedings.
355. On 4th July 2024, the judge in the case acquitted the four pastors but convicted the other 14 to a prison term of between four years and nine months and eleven days on the one hand, and six years and eight months and one day on the other. In reaching his conclusion, the judge stated that the accused committed acts detrimental to the safety and well-being of the minor Lumad students by keeping them in their company and transporting them on foot in the evening for three hours on a dark and unsecured road without assistance and presence of law enforcement, government agency or even a written consent of the minors' parents, exposing the minors to danger.
356. The complainants submit that the judge erred on both the facts that underpinned the charge against the accused and the applicable legal provisions. An appeal is pending. The complainant states that Ms. Castro continues to be subjected to attacks, red-tagging political harassment and threats. On 11th October 2023, the following remarks were made on national television and subsequently disseminated on social media by former President Duterte, whose daughter is the incumbent Vice-President of the Philippines: “*I didn't tell them [France Castro and others] face-to-face, I didn't tell them that 'you know, we're enemies, I want to kill you, but I want to kill you softly'*”. He then reportedly told his

daughter, the Vice-President: *“But your first target with the intelligence fund is you, you, France, you communists whom I want to kill. Tell her already”*. According to the complainants, the former President issued these threats due to Ms. Castro’s denunciation of the Vice-President’s alleged unauthorised receipt and use in 2022 of 125 million pesos of confidential funds.

357. Upon the insistent opposition of Ms. Castro and others to the new grant of confidential funds, the House of Representatives scrapped the Vice-President’s request. The leadership of the House of Representatives has called former President Duterte out for threatening harm to Ms. Castro. The leaders of all political parties in the House of Representatives issued a statement on 14th October 2023 saying that, *“we, leaders of all political parties in the House of Representatives, take utmost exception to the remarks made by former President Rodrigo R. Duterte”*. On 24th October 2023, Ms. Castro filed a criminal complaint against former President Duterte for serious threats in relation to the Cybercrime Act or Republic Act No. 10175. In her criminal complaint, Ms. Castro, among others, said that President Duterte’s remarks with regard to her were factually baseless and clearly malicious, but that she could not dismiss them as “figurative, joking, or otherwise benign”.
358. On 9th January 2024, the Quezon City Office of the City Prosecutor dismissed the complaint for “want of sufficient evidence”. Ms. Castro filed a petition for review with the Department of Justice on 5th February 2024. As a then MP, Ms. Elago was directly and indirectly labelled in social media posts by the police and army as a terrorist. Red-tagging in the Philippines is understood to refer to the malicious blacklisting of individuals or organisations critical or not fully supportive of the actions of a sitting government in the country. These individuals and organisations are “tagged” as either communist or terrorist, or both, regardless of their actual political beliefs or affiliations. On 7th December 2020, Ms. Elago filed a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsperson with regard to the conduct of six senior army and government officials. The matter is still pending.

The Committee’s decision and recommendation to the IPU’s Governing Council

359. The Committee held and recommended as follows:
- a) Is concerned that Ms. Castro and 13 others were convicted and sentenced to hefty prison terms for their involvement in what appears to be a legitimate rescue operation; understands in this regard that it was inevitable for the operation to be carried out in challenging circumstances and that all efforts were taken to reduce the risk to the children who were brought to safety; trusts that the court of appeal will give due consideration to all the information presented by the prosecution and the defence;
 - b) IPU sends a trial observer to the appeal proceedings with a view to monitoring and reporting on the question of respect for due process. It Considers that the criminal case against Ms. Castro and others also has to be seen in the context of the difficult environment for critical political opponents and human rights defenders in the Philippines in which to carry out their work without fear of reprisals;

- c) Remains deeply concerned in this regard that the threats that the former President of the Philippines made on air against the life of Ms. Castro have so far gone unpunished; sincerely hopes that the Department of Justice will reconsider the decision of the Prosecutor's Office and take the necessary follow up action that Ms. Castro's complaint warrants and wishes to receive more information on this point;
 - d) Remains concerned that Ms. Elago's complaint regarding her alleged red-tagging does not appear to have advanced before the Ombudsperson, with no sign of it being actively examined; recalls the legal principle that justice delayed is justice denied; again calls on the Ombudsperson to take the necessary action to examine the complaint along with any steps its findings may warrant; and wishes to be kept informed in this regard;
 - e) Requests the Secretary General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the Department of Justice, the Ombudsperson, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.
360. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(xi) Thailand

361. Alleged human rights violations are lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, violation of freedom of opinion and expression, violation of freedom of assembly and association, undue invalidation, suspension, revocation and other acts obstructing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate

Case Summary

362. The victims are 152 opposition members of the National Assembly of Thailand out of who 36 were female and 116 male. The complainant reports that on 31st January 2024, the Constitutional Court of Thailand ruled that the proposal to discuss the amendment of this law by MFP leader and prime ministerial candidate, Mr. Pita Limjaroenrat and other MFP parliamentarians were deemed to be sufficient grounds to be construed as an attempt to overthrow the democratic nature of the government with the King as Head of State.
363. The complainant adds that the Court found that such a proposal contravenes section 49(1) of the Constitution, which explicitly prohibits any individual from exercising their rights or liberties to overthrow the democratic nature of the government with the King as Head of State. The complainant specifies that the court ruling ordered the MFP to cease and desist from any action to reform section 112 of the Criminal Code, including by expressing opinions, speaking, writing, publishing or conveying messages by any other means in pursuit of amending section 112.
364. According to the complainant, the MFP agreed to comply with the ruling and made it clear that it had no intention of overthrowing the monarchy while regretting that Thai society

- would lose the opportunity to make use of its parliament to find a solution to the conflicts arising from section 112, which can lead to sentences of up to 50 years' imprisonment for critical posts on social media. Shortly after the Constitutional Court's ruling of 31st January 2024, a petition was filed with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) asking it to investigate claims of a serious ethical violation by the 44 lawmakers who had submitted the Bill to amend section 112 of the Criminal Code in 2021.
365. Section 235 of the Thai Constitution stipulates that if the NACC finds grounds for allegations of a serious ethical violation by political office holders, it will have to forward the case to the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Positions. The NACC was reported in August 2024 to be carrying out an investigation into the allegations of ethical misconduct, which was expected to last six months. In another procedure, the complainant claims that, on 12th March 2024, the Election Commission decided to petition the Constitutional Court to dissolve the MFP under the Organic Act on Political Parties (2017). This step was politically motivated and violated the political rights of the MPs concerned as well as their parliamentary mandate.
 366. On 7th August 2024, the Constitutional Court unanimously decided to dissolve the MFP and banned Mr. Limjaroenrat and the other members of the MFP executive board from exercising their political rights for 10 years. The remaining 143 MPs who were elected in 2023 would have lost their seats had they not joined another party within 60 days. On 9th August 2024, all 143 MPs joined the newly established People's Party (PP), which allowed them to keep their parliamentary seat.
 367. The aim of the PP is to carry on the legacy of the MFP under the leadership of a new executive board led by Mr. Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut. The latter is one of the 44 current and former MPs who may lose their political rights for life as a result of their proposal to discuss the amendment of section 112 in 2021, a matter that is pending before the NACC. This group also includes Deputy Speaker Padipat Suntiphada, who lost his seat as a result of the 7th August 2024 ruling, even though he had left the MFP for the Fair Party shortly after the 2023 elections.
 368. During its last review of the situation in Thailand, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee expressed its concern about the increase in the number of people detained and prosecuted for the crime of lese-majesty and about extreme sentencing practices, which result in dozens of years of imprisonment in some cases. The UN Committee called on Thailand to amend section 112 to bring it into conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and reiterated that the imprisonment of persons for exercising their freedom of expression violates Article 19 of the Covenant.
 369. Commenting on the 7th August ruling, two UN special rapporteurs said that they were dismayed by the undemocratic use of the lese-majesté law as a political tool to dissolve the MFP, adding that their proposal to amend section 112 would have brought Thailand into compliance with its international human rights obligations, thus punishing parliamentarians for seeking to uphold international law. They stressed that section 112

has no place in a modern democracy. It is outdated and out of step with international law and efforts to peacefully reform it should be supported, not thwarted.

370. In addition, the complainant reports that, on 5th February 2024, a district court found Mr. Limjaroenrat and other key progressive political figures guilty of holding a flash mob demonstration without prior notice during the 2019–2020 protests that followed the dissolution of the Future Forward Party, a past manifestation of the MFP that was dissolved in 2020. The court handed down four-month suspended prison terms to Mr. Limjaroenrat and fellow party leaders. On 27th May 2024, a provincial court convicted another MFP MP, Ms. Chonthicha Jangrew, for breaking section 112 of the Criminal Code and sentenced her to two years of imprisonment for comments she made about the King in 2021. She was later released on bail pending appeal.
371. The complainant also reported that, on 19th February 2023, the Constitutional Court ordered Mr. Limjaroenrat to temporarily cease his duties as a MP pending a final deliberation by the Court in a case involving a potential violation of election laws by his holding of shares in a defunct media company. On 24th January 2024, the Court reinstated his mandate by determining that, while he did hold some minor shares in the company in question, that company had ceased to function as a media outlet at the time. However, the complainant stresses that Mr. Limjaroenrat, the then leader of the MFP, was suspended for 190 days, which suspension was arbitrary and politically motivated as, in other cases, MPs who were not opposition leaders had not been suspended.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

372. The Committee held and recommended as follows:
- a) Is concerned by the fact that the largest party in parliament has been dissolved by the Constitutional Court and that the members of its executive board have been expelled from parliament and deprived of their political rights; and is disappointed that the practice of resorting to the dissolution of opposition political parties by the Constitutional Court remains a feature of Thai political life, despite the promising reforms that restored democratic rule;
 - b) The Thai parliamentary authorities have a duty to ensure that the rights of all its members are duly protected from any infringement; and calls on the Thai Parliament to do its utmost to protect the rights of all parliamentarians, irrespective of their affiliation;
 - c) Cannot but concur with the United Nations Human Rights Committee that section 112 of the Criminal Code of Thailand as presently constituted is not in conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and that Thailand, as a State party to the Covenant, is under an obligation to bring section 112 into conformity with international standards on freedom of expression, which rule out any imprisonment of persons exercising their freedom of expression;

- d) Strongly believes that the Thai Parliament has a vested interest and an undeniable duty to lead the way to that end and calls on the Thai parliamentary authorities to carry out a review of all legislation that is inconsistent with Thailand's international obligations in that regard and to make the necessary changes in the Criminal Code, the Organic Act on Political Parties (2017), the codes of ethics applicable to parliamentarians, as well any other relevant legislation, to prevent the recurrence of arbitrary or disproportionate measures against parliamentarians exercising their rights and fulfilling their duties;
- e) Is pleased to hear from the Thai delegation that serious discussions are underway to amend the present Constitution in order to ensure that the aspirations of Thai society for a democracy based on the full respect for the right to freedom of expression and other human rights are realized;
- f) Believes, nevertheless, that much could already be done within the framework of the present Constitution to improve issues of administration of justice and freedom of expression through appropriate oversight and legislative reform; calls on the authorities to make use of the expertise of the United Nations special procedures, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to ensure that the legislation of Thailand does in fact comply with relevant international human rights standards; and
- g) The IPU to offer assistance to the Thai authorities in any such legal review;
- h) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

373. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17 October 2024)

(xii) Tunisia

374. The alleged human rights violations are threats, acts of intimidation and impunity.

Case Summary

375. A member of the Assembly of People's Representatives of Tunisia elected in 2019 for a five-year term, Ms. Abir Moussi was the victim of acts of verbal and physical violence and sexist, degrading insults directly linked to the exercise of her parliamentary mandate. The abuse suffered by Ms. Moussi is allegedly based, on the one hand, on the fact that she is the leader of an opposition political party and, on the other, on her gender. Ms. Moussi has also received serious death threats, which she has reported to the police, who provided her with security when she was still a MP.

376. The complainant's allegations were supported by videos and excerpts from social media posts that helped identify the alleged perpetrators, including two former members of the Assembly of People's Representatives elected in 2019, Mr. Seifeddine M. [redacted] and Mr. Sahbi Smara. The latter had physically assaulted Ms. Moussi during Assembly proceedings on 30th June 2021. The two parliamentarians have not been punished as no disciplinary measures had been taken by the parliamentary authorities against them or against other members of the same political party accused of harassing and intimidating Ms. Moussi with the aim of removing her from political life.
377. In several letters sent between 2020 and 2023, the parliamentary and executive authorities pointed out that measures had been taken to protect Ms. Moussi's rights, in particular, the provision of permanent security by the Ministry of the Interior. Nevertheless, the Tunisian authorities had repeatedly asserted that Ms. Moussi's conduct was prejudicial and that certain measures taken against her were justified. On 25th July 2021, President Kais Saïed suspended parliament and lifted the parliamentary immunity of all parliamentarians, invoking Article 80 of the Constitution. The President granted himself the power to legislate by means of presidential decrees, which are not subject to judicial review given the absence of a Constitutional Court.
378. On 30th March 2022, the President officially dissolved parliament and announced a road map for the year 2022 that included the organisation of parliamentary elections and the adoption of a new Constitution. According to the results published by the Instance supérieure indépendante pour les élections, ISIE (Independent High Authority for Elections), the turnout for the parliamentary elections was around 11%. Several political parties, civil society organisations and the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), a powerful national trade union organization, boycotted the elections on the grounds that the whole constitutional process initiated by President Saïed was not free or fair. They therefore rejected the election results as illegitimate.
379. In January 2023, Ms. Moussi's political party was reportedly banned from protesting freely against the decrees adopted by President Kais Saïed. Ms. Moussi and her supporters were allegedly violently prevented from marching by a public order brigade. On 3rd October 2023, Ms. Moussi was arrested while attempting to lodge an appeal against the presidential decrees on organising and holding local elections scheduled for December 2023, citing a lack of transparency in the electoral process. On 5th October 2023,
380. The complainant averred that Ms. Moussi's detention was intended to hinder her participation in the presidential elections that took place in October 2024. No decision to extend her detention appears to have been taken pursuant to section 85 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Ms. Moussi reportedly spent nine months in pretrial detention before being sentenced in August 2024. In a letter received on 20th December 2023, the parliamentary authorities stated that they did not have any official information on the judicial cases in progress as these proceedings fell within the remit of the judicial authorities, in accordance with the principle of the separation of powers set out in the new Tunisian Constitution adopted in 2022.

381. According to the parliamentary authorities, these cases are also subject to the principle of confidentiality of the investigation in order to ensure the proper conduct of investigations and the protection of personal data. In the same letter of 20th December 2023, the parliamentary authorities refuted the allegations that the proceedings initiated against the former MPs, including Ms. Moussi, were political in nature, stating that these allegations were unfounded, without, however, providing any arguments to that effect. According to the authorities, the current proceedings are based on laws applicable to all citizens, who remain equal before the law and that involvement in politics does not guarantee immunity for those who break the law, contrary to what prevailed in the past.
382. At a hearing with the Tunisian delegation during the 148th IPU Assembly, in Geneva in March 2024, the Committee reiterated its concerns about the arbitrary detention of Ms. Moussi and the recent information received concerning her. During this meeting, the delegation undertook to provide updated information about Ms. Abir Moussi and all the other former Tunisian MPs. The Committee had decided not to adopt any new decisions in the Tunisian cases in order to foster constructive cooperation with the newly elected parliamentary authorities. However, in a letter dated 20th May 2024, the parliamentary authorities reiterated the same arguments they had already put forward in their letter of 20th December 2023.
383. On 5th August 2024, Ms. Abir Moussi was sentenced by the Tunis Court of First Instance to two years imprisonment under Decree Law No. 54 on the grounds that she had criticised the legislative election process. Ms. Moussi's sentence is said to be arbitrary as it is based on the legitimate exercise of her right to freedom of expression. In a letter sent to her supporters on 10th September 2024, Ms. Moussi denounced her detention conditions, which are contributing to the deterioration of her health. At the Committee's request, a further hearing with the Tunisian delegation was held during the 149th IPU Assembly, which took place in Geneva in October 2024.
384. With regard to the physical violence to which Ms. Moussi had been subjected, the delegation stated that the new Tunisian Constitution adopted in 2022 prohibited any act of violence inside and outside parliament. In the event of verbal or physical violence, MPs are punished and reprimanded. The Tunisian Parliament had therefore taken serious measures to guarantee a climate of respectful dialogue and to end the acts of incivility that had occurred during the former parliament. The delegation said it wanted the judicial system to conclude its investigation of Ms. Moussi's case so that her attackers did not go unpunished.
385. In response to the Committee's questions about Ms. Moussi's sentence, her prosecution and the status of legal proceedings, the parliamentary delegation reiterated that it had no information about Ms. Moussi because of the principle of separation of powers. The delegation stressed that as proceedings against Ms. Moussi were still underway and that no final ruling had been handed down. The Assembly of People's Representatives had no influence on the judicial process, which remained independent from political interference. While the delegation had no information on Ms. Moussi's situation, it nevertheless stated that all cases concerning former MPs, including Ms. Moussi's case, were not of a political

nature and had started after the end of the parliamentary mandate of the MPs. Ms. Moussi could therefore not claim parliamentary immunity, which had expired when parliament had been dissolved in 2021.

386. Regarding the request for an IPU mission, the Tunisian delegation stated that a Committee delegation would be welcome. Nevertheless, all visits were subject to procedures determined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, under the authority of the President of the Republic, which would have to consider the mission request submitted by the Committee.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

387. The Committee held as follows:

- a) Deplores the sentencing of Ms. Abir Moussi to two years in prison and the charges brought against her on the grounds that she criticized the legislative election process; does not understand how a simple criticism can justify the charges of an attack aimed at changing the form of government brought against her; and strongly recalls that Ms. Moussi's remarks were made in the context of her right to freedom of expression, one of the pillars of democracy, which is essential for MPs and which covers not only speech, opinions and comments favourably received or considered as being inoffensive but also those that are likely to offend, shock or disturb;
- b) Regrets that Ms. Moussi has been held in pretrial detention since October 2023, for almost 10 months in deplorable conditions that are allegedly detrimental to her health; and calls on the Tunisian authorities to release Ms. Moussi and to drop the charges against her, given that they appear to be based solely on the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, which are guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Tunisia has acceded;
- c) Regrets the lack of concrete information from the Tunisian authorities on Ms. Moussi's case on the grounds of separation of powers that guarantees the independence of the judiciary; stresses that while respecting the independence of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers, the parliamentary authorities could take an interest in the case of former MPs as a matter of parliamentary solidarity and exercise their supervisory powers to ask for information pertaining to public order that does not impede the course of justice;
- d) The recently elected Assembly of People's Representatives should use all the mechanisms at its disposal to exercise its supervisory powers over the executive and judiciary branches within the limits of the Tunisian constitution in order to establish its authority as a legislative body and to inform itself of the charges brought against Ms. Moussi, the date of her trial and the status of the legal proceedings brought against her, to ensure that she is given a fair trial;
- e) Reiterates its hope that a delegation from the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians will be able to visit Tunisia in the near future in order to foster

constructive and inclusive dialogue and help resolve Ms. Moussi's case; and hopes to receive a positive response and support from the Assembly of People's Representatives and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to this end to enable the mission to take place in the best possible conditions;

- f) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.

388. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17 October 2024)

(xiii) Tunisia

389. The alleged human rights violations are threats, acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process at the investigation stage and of fair trial proceedings, violation of freedom of opinion and expression, violation of freedom of assembly and association, violation of freedom of movement, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate, failure to respect parliamentary immunity and other acts obstructing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate.

Case Summary

390. This case concerns 64 members of the Assembly of People's Representatives of Tunisia elected in 2019 who, according to the complainants, are victims of arbitrary prosecutions after expressing their opposition to the exceptional measures adopted by President Kaïs Saïed since 25th July 2021. More generally, the suspension of parliament on 25th July 2021 by President Saïed had an impact on the 217 members of the Assembly of People's Representatives elected in 2019, who were deprived of their parliamentary immunity, allowances, medical insurance and freedom of movement, including for the purposes of receiving medical treatment.

391. On 30th March 2022, 120 MPs elected in 2019 took part in an online plenary session to discuss the presidential decrees. A few hours after the session, President Saïed officially dissolved parliament and the Public Prosecutor opened an investigation into the MPs for an attempted coup d'état and conspiracy against justice. For fear of reprisal, only 9 of the 120 MPs concerned, including the former Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Rached Ghannouchi, submitted a complaint to the Committee.

392. Mr. Ghannouchi was summoned for questioning on 1st April 2022 about this case. Moreover, the dissolution of parliament had, according to the complainants, additional consequences for some MPs elected in 2019 from the Ennahda and Al Karama blocs, who were directly targeted because of their opposition to President Saïed and were imprisoned before being released. These included Mr. Seifedine Makhoul and Mr. Nidhal Saoudi. Mr. Nouredine Bhiri, who had initially been arrested and detained on 31st December 2021

before being released on 8th March 2022, was again arrested on 13th February 2023 and is still being held in pretrial detention.

393. The cases concerning certain MPs are also being examined in the military courts, as provided for by Tunisian law. In the same context, Mr. Rached Khiari, who has been charged in other cases, has been detained since 3rd August 2022 on a charge of defamation against another person on social media brought by the Ministry of Education. Mr. Khiari is also alleged to have accused President Saïed of receiving foreign funding for his 2019 election campaign and is now facing the military courts on these charges. Similarly, Mr. Mehdi Ben Gharbia has been held in pretrial detention since 20th October 2021, accused of money laundering, and is allegedly still being held despite the detention exceeding the legal six-month limit.
394. In its Opinion No. 50/2023 of 26th September 2023 concerning the case of Mr. Ben Gharbia, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention considered that Mr. Ben Gharbia's detention was arbitrary based on the information provided by the source. The working group also called on the Tunisian authorities, who have not sent their official observations to the UN mechanism to release Mr. Ben Gharbia immediately and grant him the right to obtain compensation.
395. As for Mr. Rached Ghannouchi, he is allegedly the target of politically motivated persecution, as he has been charged in several cases that the complainants maintain are politically motivated. On 15th May 2023, he was sentenced by Tunisia's anti-terrorism court to one year's imprisonment and a fine for public statements he had made in 2022. In their letter of 28th January 2022, the executive authorities stated that all MPs, whose mandates had been suspended, enjoyed freedom of movement and travel, apart from those subject to a legal ruling prohibiting them from leaving the country.
396. In a more recent communication of 11th October 2022, the executive authorities confirmed that the MPs who took part in the online session of 30th March 2022 were being investigated. As for Mr. Ben Gharbia's situation, the authorities stated that he was currently the subject of a criminal prosecution; his first hearing of 7th July 2022 had been deferred to 13th October 2022. Requests for his release had been refused.
397. In May and June 2023, the complainants referred eight new complaints to the Committee concerning the cases of 8 former Tunisian MPs who were subject to arbitrary prosecutions because of their opposition to the measures taken by the President of the Republic. These include Mr. Sayed Ferjani and Mr. Ahmed Mechergui, who were allegedly arrested in April 2023, in connection with the investigation against Mr. Ghannouchi in the Instalingo case.
398. Mr. Ahmed Laâmari and Mr. Mohamed Ben Salem were arrested in March 2023 for organising an illegal border crossing and illegally holding currency. Mr. Lazhar Akremi and Mr. Ghazi Chaouachi were arrested in February 2023 in connection with a plot against state security. Mr. Ali Laraiedh, the former Prime Minister, was arrested in December 2022 on vague terrorism charges. The complainants state that he is being held in detention

without having appeared before a judge. Finally, former MP, Mr. Sahbi Atig was arrested on 6th May 2023 and prosecuted for "corruption" and "money laundering".

399. The aim of all these cases is to silence former MPs who had publicly criticized the Head of State. In a recent communication, the complainants also indicated that Ms. Lilia Bellil wished to have her name removed from the present case, on the grounds that she had never expressed the wish for the Committee to examine her case. In their letters of July and December 2023, the authorities stated that they were not in a position to provide information on the judicial proceedings under way because of the principle of the separation of powers. Furthermore, according to the parliamentary authorities, these cases are also subject to the principle of confidentiality of the investigation in order to ensure the proper conduct of investigations and protection of personal data.
400. In the same letter of 20th December 2023, the parliamentary authorities refuted the allegations that the proceedings initiated against the former MPs were political in nature, stating that these allegations were unfounded, without, however, providing any arguments to that effect. According to the authorities, the current proceedings are based on laws applicable to all citizens, who remain equal before the law and that involvement in politics does not guarantee immunity for those who break the law, contrary to what prevailed in the past. The latter invoked Article 80 of the Constitution to suspend and dissolve parliament, lifting the parliamentary immunity of MPs and granting himself the power to legislate by presidential decrees, which are not subject to judicial appeal given the absence of a Constitutional Court.
401. On 30th March 2022, the President officially dissolved parliament, announcing a road map for 2022 that included the organization of legislative elections and adoption of a new Constitution. According to the results published by the *Instance supérieure indépendante pour les élections*, ISIE (Independent High Authority for Elections), the turnout for the legislative elections, which finally took place in December 2022 and January 2023, was around 11%. Several political parties, civil society organizations and the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), a powerful national trade union organization, boycotted these elections on the grounds that the whole constitutional process initiated by President Saïed had been neither free nor fair.
402. On 22nd September 2022, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a decision against Tunisia, in which it deemed that the President of the Republic's power to take exceptional measures was limited by the procedural requirements of Article 80 of the Constitution. The Court found that the measures adopted were not only disproportionate to their stated objectives, but also to the laws of Tunisia. At a hearing with the Tunisian delegation during the 148th IPU Assembly, which took place in Geneva in March 2024, the Committee reiterated its concerns about the arbitrary detention of several former Tunisian MPs.
403. During this meeting, the delegation undertook to provide updated information about the other former MPs, including the status of proceedings initiated against them. The Committee had decided not to adopt any new decisions in the Tunisian cases in order to

foster constructive cooperation with the newly elected parliamentary authorities. However, in a letter dated 20th May 2024, the parliamentary authorities explained that the Assembly of People's Representatives, as an independent legislative body, did not interfere in legal proceedings and had no information about the legal action brought against members of the former Assembly.

404. In September 2024, the complainants indicated that 10 of the former MPs in this case were still in detention, while the cases of 9 others had been referred to the military courts. At the Committee's request, a further hearing with the Tunisian delegation was held during the 149th IPU Assembly, which took place in Geneva in October 2024. The delegation reiterated the comments made by the parliamentary authorities in their letter of 20th May 2024. The delegation stressed that, as proceedings against the former MPs were still under way and that no final ruling had been handed down, the Assembly of People's Representatives had no influence on the judicial process, which remained independent from political interference.
405. While the delegation had no information on the situation of the former MPs, it nevertheless stated that all cases concerning former MPs were not of a political nature and had started after the end of their parliamentary mandate. The former MPs could therefore not claim parliamentary immunity, which had expired when parliament had been dissolved in 2021.
406. Regarding the request for an IPU mission, the Tunisian delegation stated that a Committee delegation would be welcome. Nevertheless, all visits were subject to procedures determined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, under the authority of the President of the Republic, who would have to consider the mission request submitted by the Committee.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

407. The Committee held and recommended as follows:
- a) Reiterates its deep concern at the continued detention of 10 former Tunisian MPs on grounds that until now remain vague; and calls on the Tunisian authorities, in particular the Ministry of Justice, to provide detailed information on the cases of the imprisoned former MPs;
 - b) Reaffirms that healthy democracies are based on the diversity of political opinion, which should be heard and respected; and, to this end, calls on the Tunisian authorities to release as a matter of urgency any former MPs detained for expressing their opposition to the exceptional measures adopted by the President of the Republic and to drop the charges against them and the 120 former MPs who met on 30th March 2022, given that these proceedings appear to be based solely on the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, which are guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Tunisia has acceded;
 - c) Deeply regrets the lack of concrete information from the Tunisian authorities on this collective case on the grounds of separation of powers; stresses that while respecting

the independence of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers, the parliamentary authorities should take an interest in the case of former MPs as a matter of parliamentary solidarity, and exercise their supervisory powers to ask for information pertaining to public order that does not impede the course of justice;

- d) The recently elected Assembly of People's Representatives to use all the mechanisms at its disposal to exercise its supervisory powers over the executive and judiciary branches, within the limits of the Tunisian constitution, in order to establish its authority and to inform itself of the charges brought against the former MPs implicated in this case, the date of their trial and the status of the legal proceedings brought against them, to ensure that they are given a fair trial;
- e) Deplores the use of military courts in cases concerning civilians, including the nine former MPs; urges the Tunisian authorities to ensure that military courts are not used in cases concerning MPs elected in 2019 and to review the provisions of Tunisian law that allow this practice;
- f) Wishes to receive detailed information on the situation of all the former MPs included in this case; Reiterates the hope that a delegation from the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians will be able to visit Tunisia in the near future in order to find satisfactory solutions to the cases under examination, foster constructive and inclusive dialogue and discuss the matter of the possible provision of IPU assistance to the Tunisian Parliament;
- g) Hopes to receive a positive response and support from the Assembly of People's Representatives and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to this end to enable the mission to take place in the best possible conditions;
- h) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

408. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(xiv) Venezuela

409. The alleged human rights violations are threats, acts of intimidation, lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, violation of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate and failure to respect parliamentary immunity.

Case Summary

410. **Ms. María Corina Machado** served as an elected member of the National Assembly of Venezuela from 2011 to 2014. According to the complainant, on 24th March 2014, she then

Speaker of the National Assembly announced without any discussion in plenary that Ms. Machado had been stripped of her parliamentary mandate after she had taken part in a meeting on 21st March 2014 held by the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington DC. Ms. Machado had been invited by Panama to give her account at the OAS meeting of the situation in Venezuela at the time. The Speaker of the National Assembly reportedly said that Ms. Machado had contravened the Constitution by accepting the invitation to act as a Panamanian official at the meeting.

411. The complainant asserts that the decision to revoke Ms. Machado's mandate was taken without any respect for due process and was unfounded in law. Ms. Machado then became the subject of two criminal investigations and was excluded from the parliamentary elections of 6th December 2015 as the authorities claimed that she had presented an inaccurate declaration of assets, which the complainant considers to be untrue and a frivolous excuse to exclude her from the election race. In this context, the Comptroller General took the decision to disqualify Ms. Machado from holding public office for 15 years.
412. According to the complainant, Ms. Machado was never formally notified of this nor was she given the opportunity to defend herself during the proceedings that led to this decision. Presidential elections took place in Venezuela on 28th July 2024. Ahead of this, several opposition factions organised an internal presidential primary contest to elect a single opposition candidate. On 23rd October 2023, Ms. Machado emerged as the opposition's chosen candidate. On 26th January 2024, Venezuela's Supreme Court upheld the Comptroller General's 15-year ban on Ms. Machado from holding public office. On 19th April 2024, the opposition selected former diplomat Edmundo González as its joint presidential candidate, given it was impossible for Ms. Machado to run for office. Ms. Machado continued to campaign on his behalf.
413. According to information received by the IPU, several arrest warrants have been issued against members of Ms. Machado's campaign team, some of whom have been arrested, while others have sought refuge in the Argentine Embassy in Caracas. On 29th July 2024, the National Electoral Council (CNE) announced that President Maduro had been re-elected. The opposition rejected the CNE's announcement, describing it as fraudulent. According to information received by the IPU, Ms. Machado is currently in hiding, facing systematic harassment and threats, including possible detention and trial, under allegedly politically motivated charges.
414. In a letter sent by the Venezuelan authorities to IPU in January 2024, it was stated that there had been no political persecution or other arbitrary actions against former or current parliamentarians. The cases of former parliamentarians that are under investigation, which led to the actions of the competent organs of the Venezuelan State are based on alleged facts that constitute a violation of the established norms of the Venezuelan legal system in which the accused enjoy all the legal guarantees established by the Constitution and laws of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This position was reiterated by a delegation of members of the National Assembly elected in 2020 during a meeting with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians in January 2024. The delegation also expressed

its willingness to work with the Committee to find solutions to the Venezuelan cases before it. However, the Committee's request for updated and official information on all those cases remains unanswered to date.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

415. The Committee held and recommended as follows:

- a) Regrets the lack of response from the Venezuelan authorities to its recent requests for information and official observations regarding this and other Venezuelan cases before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians; recalls in this regard that, in accordance with its Rules and Practices, the Committee does everything possible to promote dialogue with national authorities with a view to reaching a satisfactory settlement in the cases before it;
- b) Urges competent Venezuelan authorities to engage in regular exchanges of views with the Committee in order to facilitate progress towards a satisfactory resolution of this long-standing case;
- c) Strongly condemns Ms. Machado prohibition from standing as a candidate in the presidential elections held on 28th July 2024 as a result of a unilateral act by the Comptroller General, a non-judicial authority, and a procedure that did not allow her to exercise her right of defence; recalls that Ms. Machado had already been prevented from standing as a candidate in the legislative elections of December 2015; and reiterates its view that the position taken by Venezuela's Supreme Court on Ms. Machado's ban from holding public office appears to be a continuation of ongoing actions by state institutions to restrict Ms. Machado's rights, which began when she was a prominent opposition member of parliament;
- d) Reaffirms, as stated in the IPU's Universal Declaration on Democracy, that the "key element in the exercise of democracy is the holding of free and fair elections, enabling the people's will to be expressed on the basis of universal, equal and secret suffrage so that all voters can choose their representatives in conditions of equality, openness and transparency"; and expresses its firm hope, therefore, that the national authorities will urgently take measures to ensure that, in future elections, opposition candidates and their supporters will be allowed to exercise their basic human right to take part in the conduct of public affairs on a par with the ruling party and its supporters;
- e) Solemnly reaffirms its stance that the issues in this case are part of the broader complex situation in Venezuela, which can only be resolved through political dialogue and by the Venezuelans themselves; in this regard, expresses its grave concern at the allegations received of continued acts of harassment against Ms. Machado, which appear to demonstrate that the long-standing concerns expressed by the IPU in relation to this case have not been addressed by previous efforts of dialogue;

- f) Calls on, once again, all relevant political actors to act in good faith and to commit fully to inclusive political dialogue that will bring about a new social pact through participatory and non-violent means, without foreign interference and in compliance with the State's international human rights commitments;
- g) Reaffirms that the IPU stands ready to assist in these efforts; and invites the relevant authorities to provide further official information on how this assistance can best be provided;
- h) Renews its call on all IPU MPs, IPU permanent observers, relevant human rights organisations and the international community in general to take concrete actions in support of any effort to strengthen democracy in Venezuela in a manner consistent with human rights values and within the boundaries of the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs;
- i) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

416. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17th October 2024)

(xv) Venezuela

417. The alleged human rights violations are torture, ill-treatment and other acts of violence, threats, acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process at the investigation stage, excessive delays, violation of freedom of opinion and expression, violation of freedom of assembly and association, violation of freedom of movement, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate, failure to respect parliamentary immunity, obstructing the exercise of the parliamentary mandate, impunity and violation of the right to privacy,

Case Summary

418. The case concerns allegations of human rights violations affecting 135 parliamentarians from the coalition of the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (Democratic Unity Roundtable – MUD), against the backdrop of continuous efforts by Venezuela's executive and judicial authorities to undermine the functioning of the National Assembly elected in 2015. At the time, the MUD coalition was opposed to President Nicolás Maduro's Government and obtained a majority of seats in the National Assembly in the parliamentary elections of 6th December 2015.

419. According to the complainant, almost all parliamentarians listed in the present case have been attacked or otherwise intimidated with impunity by law enforcement officers and/or pro-government officials and supporters. Between 2015 and 2020, at least 11 National

Assembly members were arrested due to politically motivated legal proceedings against them, and subsequently released. All were detained without due respect for the constitutional provisions on parliamentary immunity. There are also serious concerns regarding respect for due process and their treatment in detention. People associated with opposition parliamentarians have also been detained and harassed.

420. At least 27 parliamentarians were illegally stripped of their parliamentary immunity, some 40 have left the country, allegedly for fear of reprisals for their political activities, 30 are facing legal proceedings and at least 29 have been barred from holding public office as a result of a unilateral act by the Comptroller General, a non-judicial authority in a procedure that did not allow them to exercise their right of defence. The passports of at least 13 parliamentarians have been confiscated, not been renewed, or cancelled by the authorities as a way to exert pressure and to prevent them from travelling abroad to report what is happening in Venezuela.
421. On 31st August 2020, President Nicolás Maduro pardoned 110 members of the political opposition who had been accused of committing criminal acts. The decision meant the closure of ongoing criminal proceedings against 26 parliamentarians listed in the present case and the release of four of them. The complainant states that the harassment of opposition parliamentarians elected in 2015 has continued and intensified after the presidential elections that took place on 28th July 2024. Venezuelan judges have issued arrest warrants and extradition requests against several former MPs including Mr. Julio Borges and Mr. Juan Guaidó, both former presidents of the National Assembly, Ms. Dinorah Figuera, Ms. Marianela Fernández and Ms. Auristela Vásquez. All of them live in exile.
422. On 25th January 2023 the properties of Ms. Figuera and Ms. Vásquez were seized by the judicial authorities. In September and December 2023, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (CHRP) received detailed information about new death threats and intimidation against former Vice-president of the CHRP, Ms. Delsa Solórzano. In March 2024, the complainant reported that an arrest warrant had been issued against Mr. Omar González, who was a member of the campaign team of the opposition presidential candidate, Ms. María Corina Machado, for allegedly being linked to a destabilisation plan to create violence in the country.
423. The complainant has also reported the detention of former parliamentarians Ms. Dignora Hernández on 20th March 2024, Mr. Freddy Superlano on 30th July, Mr. Williams Dávila on 8th August, Mr. Américo de Grazia on 9th August and Mr. Biagio Pilieri on 28th August. According to the information received, all these former MPs are in detention, with no access to their lawyers, and have not been informed of the reasons for their detention. In the cases of Ms. Hernández and Mr. Dávila, they suffer from serious health problems requiring special care, which they have not received.
424. The Committee also received information on the arrest and subsequent release of former MP, Mr. Piero Maroun on 16th August 2024, together with several members of his family, including two minors. On 28th August 2024, two other parliamentarians elected in 2015,

Mr. Juan Pablo Guanipa and Ms. Solórzano, were allegedly subjected to attempted arrests by groups of unidentified armed individuals. Both are reported to be in hiding.

The Committee's decision and recommendation to the IPU's Governing Council

425. The Committee held and recommended as follows:

- a) Regrets the lack of response from the Venezuelan authorities to its recent requests for information and official observations regarding each of the individual situations before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians; recalls in this regard that, in accordance with its Rules and Practices, the Committee does everything possible to promote dialogue with national authorities with a view to reaching a satisfactory settlement in the cases before it;
- b) Sincerely hopes that the competent Venezuelan authorities will engage in regular exchanges of views with the Committee in order to facilitate progress towards a satisfactory resolution of this long-standing collective case;
- c) Remains concerned by reports that the various human rights violations committed against the parliamentarians listed in the present case, while they were MPs and as a result of their work in the parliamentary opposition, seem to remain unpunished; recalls that impunity, by shielding those responsible from judicial action and accountability, decisively encourages the perpetration of further human rights violations, and that abuses against MPs, irrespective of their opinions, when left unpunished, not only violate the fundamental rights of individual parliamentarians and of those who elected them, but also affect the integrity of parliament and its ability to fulfil its role as an institution;
- d) Urges the competent Venezuelan authorities to take concrete actions in support of the resolution of this case in a manner consistent with the respect for democratic values and human rights; and wishes to receive official and detailed information on any steps taken in this regard;
- e) Reaffirms its stance that the issues, in this case, are part of the broader complex situation in Venezuela, which can only be resolved through political dialogue and by the Venezuelans themselves; in this regard, expresses its grave concern at the allegations received of continued intimidation, persecution, arbitrary detention, threats, restrictions on political rights and other acts of harassment against members of the political opposition, including former parliamentarians, which appear to demonstrate that the long-standing concerns expressed by the IPU in relation to the cases referred to the Committee have not been addressed by previous efforts of dialogue; calls on, once again, all relevant political actors to act in good faith and to commit fully to inclusive political dialogue that will bring about a new social pact through participatory and non-violent means, without foreign interference and in compliance with the State's international human rights commitments;

- f) Reaffirms that the IPU stands ready to assist with these efforts; and invites the relevant authorities to provide further official information on how this assistance can best be provided;
- g) Renews its call on all IPU Member Parliaments, IPU permanent observers, relevant human rights organizations and the international community in general to take concrete actions in support of any effort to strengthen democracy in Venezuela in a manner consistent with human rights values and within the boundaries of the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs;
- h) Requests the Secretary-General to convey this decision to the competent Venezuelan authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information; Requests the Committee to continue examining the case and to report back to it in due course.

426. The Committee's decision was adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session (Geneva, 17 October 2024)

2. The Forum and Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

427. The 38th season of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians was held on 13th October 2024. It brought together 147 participants, including 108 parliamentarians out of whom 99 were women and 9 men from 77 countries, along with representatives from various international organizations. The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, Ms. C. Lopez Castro (Mexico), chaired the session.

428. As a contribution to the work of the Assembly, participants examined, from a gender perspective, the draft resolution of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights entitled *the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law*. The Forum then proposed three amendments to the draft resolution to the Standing Committee as well as four expressions of support for amendments proposed by Member Parliaments.

429. The Forum also organized a panel discussion on Sustaining peace and providing justice to women and girls, during which participants stressed the importance of laws to sanction perpetrators of gender based and sexual violence and to provide adequate support to victims, both in conflict situations and in times of peace. Participants called for the establishment of gender-sensitive judicial systems, not only to try these crimes but also to address their root causes.

430. Strengthening international cooperation and solidarity, significantly increasing women's participation and incorporating the experiences of conflict victims into peace talks and reconstruction processes were identified as prerequisites for lasting peace. The Bureau of Women Parliamentarians met on 13th and 17th October 2024. The meeting of 13th October was dedicated to preparing the work of the Forum's 38th session, and the meeting of 17th

October took stock of the results of the 149th Assembly from a gender perspective and made preparations for the Forum's next session and future work.

3. The Forum and Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians

431. The Forum of Young Parliamentarians was held on 14th October 2024 and brought together 65 young parliamentarians, 36% of whom were women. The meeting was presided over by Mr. D. Carden of the United Kingdom who is the President of the Board of the Forum.
432. The 10th anniversary of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians set the tone for the meeting. The IPU President and Secretary General made opening remarks that reaffirmed their commitment to the Forum and its mission to empower young MPs and youth. Former and current members of the Forum then shared testimonials on the lasting impact the Forum had in strengthening their work as MPs and in creating a united movement for youth at the IPU.
433. Forum members provided updates on recent developments in their countries. They also contributed youth perspectives to the topics before the current IPU Assembly and held a question-and-answer session on taking the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign to the next level. The Forum appointed the Board President to prepare a report on the proposed resolution on *the role of parliaments in advancing a two-state solution in Palestine* and tasked Mr. W. Soto of Peru to prepare a report on the proposed resolution on Parliamentary strategies to mitigate the long-lasting impact of conflicts, including armed conflicts, on sustainable development both of which will be examined at the 150th IPU Assembly in April 2025.
434. At its meeting earlier that day, the Forum held a minute of silence for Palestinian and Lebanese victims currently impacted by the conflict in the Middle East. They highlighted the disproportionate impact that conflicts and wars have on young people in all parts of the world. The young MPs agreed to focus more on mobilising young people to participate in peace efforts.

4. The Committee on Middle East Operations

435. The Committee held two virtual informal meetings on Middle East Questions on 20th June and 11th July 2024 to coordinate its planned visit to Israel, Palestine and the region with at least 6 members participating in each. Due to prevailing security concerns related to the situation on the ground and logistical challenges related to the availability of Committee members, it was agreed to reschedule it for a time when conditions would be more favourable.
436. The inability of the Committee to take actionable steps towards de-escalating the conflict or facilitating dialogue between conflict parties has raised questions among Committee members about the Committee's effectiveness, mandate and role. Responding to this concern, the Secretariat issued a questionnaire to members in advance of the formal meeting during the Assembly, inviting them to share their expectations of the Committee.

Four members namely; Indonesia, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Türkiye submitted responses to the questionnaire.

437. The Committee held sittings on 14th and 16th October 2024 with at least 9 members in attendance. Members heard a report from the Secretariat on regional developments since the 148th Assembly and their impact on the Committee's planned activities. These included the spread of the conflict militarily into Lebanon, the deteriorating security situation in the West Bank and attacks on and from State and non-state actors allied with Hamas. The United Nations had passed several resolutions in an attempt to de-escalate the situation and appeals had been made to the International Court of Justice.
438. The Secretariat presented an overview of a report it had compiled on the work of the IPU regarding the situation in and between Palestine and Israel, including the number of emergency items and resolutions which had addressed this conflict. The Committee president shared this report with the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security.
439. A discussion took place about the mandate of the Committee. In this regard, different perspectives on the root causes of the current state of the conflict were shared, along with the role that the Committee could play. There was concern that despite numerous UN resolutions and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions, the conflict continued and was spreading. Committee members expressed disappointment at the inability of IPU Member Parliaments to vote on an emergency item regarding this conflict at two consecutive Assemblies.
440. The need to identify common ground, based on dialogue and the joint desire to establish trust, as a basis for continuing the committee's work, was agreed by members. Foundational issues pertaining to the future of the Committee that were raised included whether an acknowledgement of the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory should be shared by all Committee members as a precondition for it to be able to continue its work. It was mentioned that Palestinian statehood could not be considered without first guaranteeing the security of Israel. It was reminded that the Committee was about a peace process and need not be tied to specific outcomes.
441. The Committee also discussed the need for improvement in the coordination of the various actions of IPU bodies and representatives related to the situation in the Middle East. A coordinated and united approach was more effective than a fragmented one, and the Committee wished to discuss this topic with the Secretary-General.
442. The Secretariat mentioned that in its 36 years of existence, the Committee, which addressed the "*conflict of all conflicts*", had frequently faced situations of heightened regional tensions and had still persevered. The unique nature of the Committee was noted, where both parties sit together at the table, presenting a unique opportunity for direct and unmitigated dialogue. Members reiterated the importance of visiting the region to gain a first-hand impression of the situation on the ground. If the security situation did not allow

a visit to Palestine and Israel, then a retreat could be planned in the region, where members could hear from experts involved in peacebuilding directly related to the ongoing conflict.

443. The Committee discussed the upcoming resolution of the IPU Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, which would address the role of parliaments in advancing a two-State solution and how the Committee might support this. The Committee was dedicated to preserving its neutrality with respect to the different positions of its two ex officio members. Some members expressed support for the Standing Committee resolution and the importance of Palestinian statehood for the security of all States in the region. The Committee on Middle East Questions would provide the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security with all its data and research. It was noted in connection with a vote in the Israel unicameral Parliament in July 2024 against the establishment of a Palestinian state, which had passed with a strong majority, that any action at the present time towards supporting a Palestinian state could be interpreted as rewarding the violent actions of Hamas.
444. During its sitting on 16th October, 2024, the Committee heard from Mr. M. Lassouaoui of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), who provided an overview of the situation in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, the work of UNRWA and how its work had been negatively impacted since 7th October 2023. Regarding the allegations made against UNRWA that it employed staff who were affiliated with Hamas, the representative presented the conclusions of reports on the matter, including from the UN Office of Oversight Services, which had not been able to independently authenticate information used as evidence to support the allegations.
445. Mr. M. Lassouaoui addressed a major concern of UNRWA, namely two bills currently before the Israel unicameral Parliament which, if passed - which the Agency deemed likely - would prohibit UNRWA from operating in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, remove the privileges and immunities granted to UNRWA staff and potentially put staff at risk. If passed, the bills would prevent UNRWA from delivering on its mandate, putting the lives of millions of people at risk: UNRWA is currently responsible for 60% of humanitarian aid in Gaza. Mr. M. Lassouaoui appealed to Committee members to take all possible action to stop these bills, as well as to petition their governments to financially support UNRWA's activities.
446. Following the presentation, members expressed their support for the work of UNRWA and its mandate. They recommended a firm and urgent appeal to the Israel Parliament not to pass these motions and to do whatever was within their power to improve the delivery of humanitarian aid to all those in need, especially now that the winter was approaching and to contribute to rebuilding mutual trust and cooperation with UNRWA as a United Nations body with a unique, indispensable and irreplaceable position to deliver on what was desperately needed at present.
447. Committee members remained committed to the cause of parliamentary diplomacy grounded in dialogue and trust. They acknowledged the current extraordinary circumstances and shared a concern for the safety and well-being of all civilians and the

urgent need to de-escalate tensions. Discussion of the Committee's mandate would be ongoing, and there was a shared commitment to visit the region and work to identify meaningful contributions that parliamentarians could make. A first step in this regard, while the security situation in Palestine was still compromised, would be a retreat at the Synchrotron-Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) centre in Jordan in the near future, to continue discussions about the Committee's mandate and future activities.

5. Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

448. The Committee held a sitting on 15th October 2024 chaired by its President, Hon. John Kiari Waweru of the National Assembly of Kenya and transacted business as follows:

(i) Report on actions taken on selected humanitarian issues

449. The Committee discussed the follow-up to its previous session in March 2024 and reported on the actions taken by its members.

450. Australia reported on efforts to raise awareness in Parliament about the situation of the 38 former Afghan parliamentarians who were in danger and seeking refuge. In Thailand, legislative proposals were being developed to address the situation of stateless persons in the country, in particular through the Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs, Justice and Human Rights. Malta reported on the Parliament's recent organization of a conference of Speakers of Parliaments from Mediterranean countries to discuss the situation of migrants and refugees in the region.

451. Legislative actions had been taken in Bahrain to guarantee that stateless people had the right to access basic services in the country. Kenya's Parliament had been working towards the ratification of International Humanitarian Law treaties including disarmament conventions, and the adoption of laws granting nationality to stateless communities in the country.

452. The Committee agreed to continue following up on these issues and to report on them at future Assembly meetings.

(ii) International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts

453. The Committee discussed the latest report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on *International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts*, which will be presented at the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in October 2024. A representative of the ICRC shared the main findings of the report with a special focus on the topic of new technologies of warfare.

454. The Committee discussed these findings and expressed concern about the dehumanisation of armed conflicts through the use of these new technologies, such as when weapon

systems are used to select. The Committee noted with concern that the use of digital technologies in warfare, which may have seemed a distant prospect, is now a reality.

455. Regarding cyber operations, information operations and other digital threats, the report highlights that State and non-state actors have been using cyber operations to disable civilian government services or disrupt the provision of essential services such as electricity, water and medical care. Belligerents have also used social media platforms and messaging services to incite violence against civilian populations and military personnel hors de combat and more generally to dehumanise their adversaries. The digitalisation of armed conflicts has also drawn civilians into hostilities, which exposes them to the risk of harm.
456. The report also draws attention to the challenges related to the growing reliance on weapon systems with varying degrees of autonomy and on systems that use artificial intelligence to inform decisions on who or what to attack and how. With regard to military operations in outer space, the report also sheds light on the potential human cost of these operations, given that essential civilian services are becoming increasingly dependent on systems in outer space.
457. The committee discussed these findings and expressed concern about the dehumanisation of armed conflicts through the use of these new technologies, such as when weapon systems are used to select targets without human intervention. The Committee reiterated that fundamental IHL rules enshrined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols apply to and must guide the development and use of these new technologies. However, the Committee also agreed that new laws might be needed in this area and that parliamentary action to support these efforts was essential. It therefore decided to organize future online briefings and webinars in partnership with the ICRC to inform and engage the global parliamentary community in this area.

(iii) Review of specific situations of humanitarian concern

458. The Committee received an update on recent developments in situations of humanitarian concern that it had been monitoring over the past few years. During this session, it paid particular attention to Sudan. The Committee invited UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency to provide a briefing on the main data and protection issues regarding the situation in Sudan, including those related to refugee protection.
459. Sudan currently faces the most significant internal displacement crisis in the world. The country has 8.1 million internally displaced persons, 2.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers in other countries, 640,224 returnees and 258,129 secondary displaced refugees and asylum-seekers. It also faces the most significant child displacement crisis in the world, with over 4.6 million children displaced inside and outside the country. Protection concerns include discrimination, exploitation and abuse; sexual and gender-based violence and child protection; arbitrary taxation by armed elements; arrest, detention and deportation; movement restriction; return under adverse conditions; harmful coping mechanisms; food insecurity; and inter-communal violence.

460. The international community has called for an end to the conflict, a commitment to peace, the protection of civilians and compliance with IHL. In addition, predictable and sustained access is needed, especially safe and unhindered access to humanitarian supplies and personnel in hard-to-reach areas. Ensuring freedom of movement for forcibly displaced persons is also a priority. Humanitarian aid to Sudan is underfunded, with only 34% of the required budget reached in 2024.
461. The Committee expressed its solidarity with the situation faced by the people of Sudan and committed to drawing attention to this significant humanitarian situation, which remains relatively invisible. It highlighted the plight of Sudanese displaced persons who find themselves in situations that increase their vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking. The Committee also endorsed the call for more funding for humanitarian aid in the context of the situation in Sudan and noted the need to strengthen cooperation and ensure efficiency and transparency in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
462. In view of the current situation in the Middle East, the Committee drew attention to the challenge and importance of ensuring respect for IHL. The Committee observed that the escalation of the conflict, the disruption of oil flow from the Mediterranean and the Arabian Gulf to Europe and the deterioration of the global economy would affect everyone and appealed to those involved in the dispute to exercise restraint and avoid being dragged into wars.
463. The Committee recalled its previous calls for armed conflicts to stop, for IHL to be respected and for humanitarian assistance to be provided to affected civilians, including refugees and internally displaced populations.

(iv) Parliamentary commitments towards ending statelessness

464. The committee discussed efforts towards ending statelessness. It welcomed the launch of the *Global Alliance to End Statelessness* in October 2024 of which the IPU is a member, and stressed the importance of the Alliance in enhancing cooperation, including by integrating and mobilising the parliamentary community to tackle statelessness. The Committee also discussed the involvement of civil society organisations in this area. It heard from Ms. Catherine Harrington from the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights (GCENR) and Ms. Deepti Gurung, a statelessness advocate from Nepal and 2024 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award recipient for Asia-Pacific on their efforts to end statelessness.

(v) Election of the new President

465. The Committee elected Hon. A. Farrugia (Malta), Speaker of Parliament as its new President for an initial one-year term with the possibility of one renewal. He replaced Hon. J.K. Waweru, who had served two full terms and was ineligible for reelection.

6. Group of Facilitators for Cyprus

466. The Group of Facilitators for Cyprus met on 13th October 2024. The meeting was attended by one Facilitator, Mr. L. Wehrli (Switzerland), five representatives of political parties of the Republic of Cyprus and two representatives of the Turkish Cypriot political parties.
467. The parties expressed the hope that the informal meeting between the UN Secretary-General and the leaders of the Greek Cypriot community and Turkish Cypriot community held on 15th October 2024 would lead to the resumption of talks to reach a lasting solution to the Cyprus problem under the auspices of the United Nations.

7. IPU Task Force on the peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine

468. Since its inception in March 2022, the Task Force on the Peaceful Resolution of the War in Ukraine has aimed to promote political dialogue in support of peacebuilding initiatives and explore possible avenues for collaboration to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. The Task Force continues to express significant concern regarding the ongoing war, which has led to the destruction of critical infrastructure in Ukraine and many casualties on both sides.
469. In the interim, the Task Force has decided to focus on specific humanitarian issues that may ultimately allow it to foster dialogue and enhance understanding, possibly yielding positive outcomes. These issues are: (1) nuclear safety, (2) food security, (3) access to, treatment and exchange of prisoners of war, (4) safety of ecologically vulnerable sites, and (5) the situation of conflict-displaced children.
470. In March 2024, the Task Force noted that plans were being made for a Summit on Peace in Ukraine to be held in Switzerland in June 2024 and indicated that the IPU should consider its potential involvement in this process. To this end, the Swiss authorities were contacted. The Summit was described as the first step towards establishing a diplomatic framework involving countries that had good relations with both parties. While the first phase of the Summit was only held at the inter-governmental level, there was a shared interest in exploring avenues for future collaboration in view of a more inclusive second phase.
471. During the Task Force's March 2024 meeting, the parties to the conflict agreed to deepen cooperation with the IPU on the issue of Ukrainian children in the Russian Federation or in conflict zones who had been separated from their parents or legal guardians. The Task Force was encouraged by both parties' readiness to work on a case-by-case basis to assist and support measures that would facilitate family reunifications. Following this commitment, the IPU held a meeting with the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and received details of a limited number of cases of children who had been relocated from Ukraine to the Russian Federation.
472. The Task Force held its 13th meeting on 15th October 2024 during the 149th IPU Assembly and began discussions with both delegations on the above-mentioned cases as well as with

a representative of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights. The Task Force was encouraged by the fact that parliamentarians from both countries underscored that any children who have been separated from their parents, siblings, legal guardians and/or close relatives should be reunited with them, as well as their readiness to assist the Task Force in this process.

473. In light of the fact that a proposed direct meeting between the Ukrainian and Russian ombudspersons' institutions did not come to fruition during the 149th Assembly, the Task Force extended an invitation to both delegations to facilitate such a meeting in the near future, possibly during the 150th IPU Assembly in April 2025 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
474. The Task Force expressed deep concern over the escalating nuclear risks associated with the ongoing war and reiterated that parliamentarians had a particular responsibility to tone down narratives and discourses. The Task Force welcomed assurances by the parties that the use of nuclear weapons was a red line that should never be crossed and that nuclear energy facilities needed to be protected.
475. The Task Force remains committed to using parliamentary diplomacy to mitigate the severe humanitarian impacts of the war and to help bring about a peaceful resolution to the war in Ukraine.

8. High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG)

476. On 13th October 2024, the IPU High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG) convened its seventeenth meeting. The Chairperson, Mr. M. Karlsson from Sweden, welcomed all participants, including invited experts Ms. F. Lombardi from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Mr. S. Stroobants from the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). The Chairperson underscored the pivotal role of the HLAG in the IPU's efforts to discuss and make decisions related to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism.
477. The Group agreed on a work plan presented by the Secretariat. The work included ongoing activities in three regions and implementation of activities outlined in the declaration, *Global Response to the Call of the Sahel*, ratified during the Second Global Parliamentary Summit on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism. One of the Declaration's key recommendations is to establish an ad-hoc group within the HLAG intended to coordinate and monitor activities in the Sahel. This Group will comprise five facilitators, each responsible for one of the priority areas: community, environment, security, development and education. Members were encouraged to consider their areas of interest and to communicate their preferences to the Chairperson promptly.
478. Discussions centred on the importance of parliamentarians initiating a broad dialogue on what constitutes terrorism based on consensus and aimed at avoiding unproductive debates that would not lead to positive outcomes. The Chairperson highlighted that the briefing document presented by the Secretariat served merely as a compilation of various

discussions held worldwide across different sectors; it did not seek to propose any specific agenda or give greater prominence to certain issues over others.

479. Another significant discussion centred on the situation in the Sahel and how the Group's efforts can ensure that its actions remain relevant and effective, especially in light of the recent coups in several countries in the region and the emergence of new alliances. It was highlighted that the epicenter of terrorism continues to reside in this region, with Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger ranking among the top ten countries facing severe security challenges and threats from terrorism, compounded by a lack of resilience that impedes progress.
480. It was reported that the five areas outlined in the *Call of the Sahel* must be collectively addressed to bolster the stability of these nations. It was essential for governments to provide basic needs to their populations to prevent individuals from turning to terrorist groups due to resource deprivation. Additionally, it was emphasised that the Sahel region is increasingly witnessing new dynamics in the relationships between terrorists and organised crime, making it more necessary than ever to analyse and address these trends. It was agreed that striving for positive peace in these countries is crucial, as development and security must go hand in hand.
481. In terms of the financial situation, the National People's Congress of China had signed a renewal of its cooperation agreement with the IPU, which will help continue the work of the IPU Programme on Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism (CT/PVE). Similar agreements are being concluded with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. However, additional funds are needed to carry out all the proposed activities, develop the products outlined in the work programme and increase human resources as only one person is currently working to implement the whole programme. It was clarified that even though the political situation in some Sahel countries is uncertain, the IPU cannot cease collaboration with MPs who are IPU members.
482. Two new topics were agreed upon for discussion at the next HLAG meeting, which will take place during the 150th IPU Assembly. The first discussion will focus on how artificial intelligence can be positively used in the fight against organised crime and terrorism, and the second will address the prevention of violent extremism and migration.

9. IPU Working Group on Science and Technology

483. The group held three sittings online on 19th and 23rd September 2024 and one in Geneva on 15th October 2024. At least ten members attended each of these meetings in person or virtually. During its sittings on 19th and 23rd September 2024, the Working Group members reviewed the proposed amendments on the IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology received from the Parliaments of Canada, Nicaragua, the Russian Federation and Switzerland, as well as from academics, scientists and partner organisations.
484. The members engaged in a thorough analysis of the feedback, considering each proposal in detail to assess its alignment with the overarching goals of the Charter. After carefully

integrating relevant feedback, the Working Group officially signed off on the finalised Charter on 23 September 2024.

485. During its sitting on 15th October 2024, the Group was briefed by its Chairperson, Mr. D. Naughten of Ireland on his participation in the parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 10th World Water Forum held on 20th and 21st May 2024 in Bali, Indonesia. The outcome document of this meeting, the *Nusa Dua Communiqué*, incorporated the recommendations of the IPU Science for Peace Parliamentary Meeting on *Water security and insecurity: Rebuilding peaceful coexistence with science* held in September 2023.
486. The Bali meeting identified several key actions, including ensuring water is a standing item on parliamentary agendas, using the Sustainable Development Goals framework to develop long-term water policies, protecting the human rights to water and sanitation and advocating for adaptive measures and sustainable water management to build resilience against the impact of climate change. The Chairperson also outlined potential next steps to advance the recommendations of the first edition of the Science for Peace Schools on water, including cooperation with the World Water Council and the UN Water Convention.
487. The Group chairperson announced to members that the report *Mapping engagement between parliament and science* on the results of the survey that was circulated on 1st February 2024 had been finalised and published on the IPU website during the Assembly. The results show that engagement between parliaments and the scientific community occurs through both formal and informal channels. The most common method of engagement is the invitation of expert witnesses to parliamentary committees to consider specific legislation, which is common practice in 60% of parliaments. The most common service is "general research services", available in 79% of parliaments. The least common service is "specific science-based research services", available in 18% of parliaments.
488. The Group members were encouraged to participate in the Parliamentarians' Roundtable at the 12th World Urban Forum, organised by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN- Habitat) with the support of the IPU, to be held in Cairo, Egypt, on 7th November 2024. The Roundtable will tackle the role of parliamentarians in facilitating legislation, policies, finance, advocacy and partnerships with direct impact on cities and communities within the context of the urban-rural continuum.
489. The Group discussed other ongoing projects including the Science for Peace Schools and they recommended that its second edition on artificial intelligence (AI) and ethics be held in two separate sessions for parliamentary staff and parliamentarians in 2025. The first session for parliamentary staff on *Understanding AI: Ethics and the IPU Charter* would be held in cooperation with the Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) in Allan, Jordan, in May 2025. The second session for parliamentarians on *Regulating AI Ethics and the IPU Charter* would be held in cooperation with the International Centre for Interdisciplinary Science and Education (ICISE) in Quy Nhon, Viet Nam, in September 2025.

490. The Group members agreed that the political environment is now favourable for the adoption of the IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology, with parliaments ready to engage with its principles. They emphasized the need for diligent follow-up on the IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology to prevent it from being overlooked, ensure its implementation and promote its use as a model for ethical considerations in AI and future innovations.
491. In this regard, the Working Group members stressed the importance of planning the next steps for disseminating the Charter widely, advocating for its use at the governmental and parliamentary levels in collaboration with scientists and academia. They also discussed the possibility of drafting an annex to the Charter to provide guidelines for monitoring its application and evaluating its impact. They highlighted the responsibility of the participants of the 149th IPU Assembly to promote the Charter in their respective parliaments and via social media and suggested launching a campaign to ensure the Charter's visibility and raise awareness of it through flyers and other informative materials during IPU Assemblies, conferences and events.
492. Accordingly, the Group members suggested organising events in their respective parliaments to announce the adoption of the charter, reinforcing a collective commitment to its principles. The discussions underscored the urgency for proactive measures in disseminating the charter and fostering collaboration among parliaments to ensure a unified understanding and application of its ethical standards.
493. The Working Group elected Ms. S. Attia of Egypt as its Chairperson and Ms. M. Cederfelt of Sweden as its Vice-Chairperson and adopted its work plan for 2024-2025.

10. Gender Partnership Group

494. The Gender Partnership Group held its 50th session on 12th and 16th October 2024. In attendance were the Chairperson, Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi of United Arab Emirates, Ms. S. Mikayilova of Azerbaijan, Mr. A. Almodobar Barcelo of Spain and Ms. N.B.K. Mutti of Zambia.
495. As per its mandate, the Group reviewed the state of women's participation in national parliaments, as well as in IPU bodies and Assemblies. It examined in particular the composition of delegations at the 149th Assembly. As of 16th October 2024, 36.4% of the delegates at the Assembly were women which was an improvement from the last few Assemblies but still below the record 39% women delegates in Nusa Dua in 2022 and in Madrid in 2021. Gender-balanced delegations were on the rise at the 149th Assembly. At this Assembly, 49 delegations out of 129 (38%) were gender-balanced, meaning that they were composed of 40 to 60% women or men. This is a much higher percentage than at the last Assembly where 30.3% of delegations (44 out of 145) were gender-balanced.
496. Out of the 129 delegations which attended the meeting, 121 were composed of at least two delegates of which only seven were all-male (5.8%). In addition, two delegations of two or more delegates were composed entirely of women. The nine single-sex delegations were

from the parliaments of Belarus, Brazil, Denmark, Ecuador, Guinea, Ireland, Liberia, Rwanda and Yemen. In addition, there were eight single-member delegations attending the Assembly. All in all, seven delegations are subject to sanctions at this Assembly. The Group also deliberated on the special cases of delegations that have not attended several consecutive Assemblies. It decided that the IPU should not apply sanctions on single-sex delegations if they had been absent for four Assemblies or more.

497. The Group took stock of the measures taken to implement *the Policy to prevent and address harassment, including sexual harassment, at IPU Assemblies and other IPU events*. As a part of the IPU's harassment prevention efforts, the policy continued to be made available on IPU platforms and promoted during meetings. For this Assembly, visual aids were made more visible. Specific training had also been provided to a larger number of IPU staff and training sessions would soon be proposed for MPs and other participants in IPU Assemblies and other events. Structures and processes had also been set up. IPU focal points were once again assigned for the Assembly whereby an anti-harassment core group had been set up within the Secretariat and was ready to receive complaints via email address; speakout@ipu.org.
498. The Group also pursued discussions on how to support parliaments with few or no women members. Based on the parliamentary renewals held between January and August 2024, progress had been slower than in previous years with a gain of a mere 0.1 percentage points in 8 months as compared to an annual increase of 0.4 points in 2023 and 2022. Overall, there still remained 21 lower or single chambers of parliament with less than 10% women members with Bhutan entering this group following its latest election. Among these 21 chambers, three namely; Oman, Tuvalu and Yemen have no women. The Group held dialogue sessions with the delegations from Bhutan and Oman to discuss how to improve the situation following the recent decrease in the representation of women in their respective parliaments.
499. The Group met with the Bhutanese delegation headed by the Speaker of the National Assembly and including members from both chambers. The delegation indicated that the country's Constitution was grounded in the notion of equity, which included gender-balanced representation in all spheres of life. While there had been an increase in women's representation in local government and public service, their representation in parliament had decreased at the last elections.
500. Following the April 2023 elections to the National Council (upper chamber), women now held 12% of seats (down from 16%); whereas the January 2024 elections to the National Assembly (lower chamber) led to women occupying only 4.3% of seats (down from 14.9%). Societal barriers and the high cost of political campaigns were some of the key challenges identified by the delegation in securing the stronger political participation of women. Job security was identified as particularly challenging for women in public service, who must resign from their posts if they wish to run for public office.
501. The Group welcomed the delegation's request for the IPU's support in conducting a study on the reasons for women's underrepresentation in politics in Bhutan and encouraged the

Bhutanese Parliament to fully take into account the conclusions from the study to inform future policies and legal reforms to enhance women's political participation. The Group also had a fruitful dialogue with the delegation from Oman, including members of both the Shura Council (lower chamber) and the State Council (upper chamber). Oman has a good track record of women's representation in appointed positions at the national and international levels and 70% of enrolments in higher education are women. However, in the 2023 elections to the Shura Council, no women were elected. Challenges identified by the delegation included the socialization of women as caregivers and not as potential decision-makers.

502. A task force was being set up to train women interested in running for parliamentary elections and a plan was being developed to include emphasis on the importance of women in decision-making and in parliament in school textbooks and raise awareness on social media. However, while there were ongoing discussions on the introduction of legislated gender quotas to enhance women's participation, no concrete proposal from government had yet been made public.
503. The Group encouraged the delegation to accelerate its efforts in raising awareness and develop a comprehensive roadmap in this regard that would include reviewing the legal framework to advance women's representation in parliament. It responded positively to the delegation's request for support from the IPU in providing details of existing good practices to inform their efforts in this area.

11. Advisory Group on Health

504. The IPU Advisory Group on Health met on 13th October 2024, with four out of five members in attendance, as well as technical partners from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids (UNAIDS).
505. The Group discussed the follow-up to the 2019 IPU resolution on universal health coverage (UHC). It heard an update on global health governance developments pertaining to UHC from Dr. Bruce Aylward, WHO Assistant Director-General for UHC and Life Course. The Group focused on challenges restricting access to health services, including financial barriers. It asked the IPU Secretariat to prepare a monitoring framework for the implementation of the resolution, taking into account existing resources and called for capacity-building for parliamentarians.
506. The Group further discussed the current outbreak of mpox, which was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organisation in August 2024. The Group reflected on the shift of attention away from other health priorities, the pressure of health emergencies on health systems and the importance of equity in being at the centre of decisions on disease treatment and vaccine distribution. The Group also reiterated the important role parliamentarians play in raising awareness and engaging communities, which are key to stopping mpox.

507. As part of efforts to strengthen linkages between IPU's work on health and climate change, the Group decided to submit a contribution to the outcome document of the COP29 Parliamentary Meeting. The Group wishes to highlight that climate change is a health-risk multiplier and to call for policies and investment to address key challenges related to food insecurity, extreme weather-related illnesses and vector-borne diseases.

PART 6

6. OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

508. Several other activities and events were held during the 149th Assembly and related meetings as follows:

1. Joint meeting with the Chairpersons of the Geopolitical Groups and the Presidents of the Standing Committees

509. On 13th October 2024, the IPU President and Secretary General met with the Chairpersons of the geopolitical groups and the Presidents of the Standing Committees. The IPU President provided a summary of her main projects and activities since the last Assembly, underscoring her initiatives to promote parliamentary diplomacy in relation to the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. She had represented the Organization at several multilateral events, including the UN Summit of the Future, the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the International Conference on Nuclear Security, the BRICS Parliamentary Forum, and the G7 Speakers' Meeting.

510. Over the past six months, the president had completed 15 international visits aimed at strengthening collaboration between the IPU and its Member Parliaments on matters including climate action, gender equality, youth inclusion and sustainable development. Welcoming the IPU President's efforts to engage with IPU Member Parliaments worldwide, Mr. W. William of Seychelles suggested that the small island developing States could constitute their own geopolitical group within the Organization, a proposal that needed to be given careful examination.

511. The IPU Secretary-General gave an overview of the highlights of the 149th Assembly and an update on progress regarding the amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules. The Executive Committee had submitted a set of proposed amendments to the Governing Council and Assembly for final approval. He also presented an overview of the annual reporting exercise by Member Parliaments and encouraged the Chairpersons of the geopolitical groups to remind their members due to report in 2025 to participate in this exercise.

512. As the IPU was marking the 10-year anniversary of its Common Principles for Support to Parliaments, the Secretary-General invited the few Member Parliaments that had not yet endorsed them to do so. The Chairpersons of the geopolitical groups provided an overview of their recent activities. Mr. M. Bouden of Algeria and Chairperson of the African Group said that the Group held two meetings ahead of the Assembly and encouraged the IPU Secretariat to engage with the Group before Assemblies for improved coordination. Mr. B. Boughali of Algeria and Chairperson of the Arab Group stated that efforts were being made to translate all IPU documentation into Arabic, and to this end, he requested that documents be sent further in advance.

513. Mr. Tian Xuejun of China had assumed the Chairmanship of the Asia-Pacific Group as Bangladesh had been unable to continue in the role as the Parliament had been dissolved. The Group met to coordinate the list of vacancies for the 149th Assembly. Mr. M. Nadir of Guyana, Chairperson of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean reported that the Group had agreed on a single candidate for the Group's vacancy on the IPU Executive Committee. Mr. L. Wehrli of Switzerland, Chairperson of the Twelve Plus Group said that multiple meetings had been organised within the Group since the last Assembly, including to discuss the situation in Ukraine and to celebrate the Group's 50th anniversary.
514. Mr. W. William of Seychelles, President of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, said that he had represented the IPU in various activities, including the Parliamentary Meeting at the World Water Forum in May 2024. He had also recently participated in a meeting with experts on the impact of conflict on sustainable development, the subject of the Committee's next resolution. Mr. D. McGuinty of Canada, President of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs highlighted the recently adopted Pact for the Future which recognized the importance of the UN's engagement with national parliaments and committed to a deepening of the UN's engagement with the IPU.
515. Mr. A. Torosyan of Armenia, Vice-President of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, said that 26 Member Parliaments had submitted amendments for the Committee's resolution on the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy. The co-rapporteurs had produced a concise and clear draft expected for adoption. Mr. L. Wehrli of Switzerland, a member of the Bureau of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, highlighted the recently published IPU toolkit.

2. Workshop on Practical tools to achieve sustainable development

516. The IPU has created a range of practical tools to support parliaments in enhancing national responses to key sustainable development challenges, particularly in low-resource settings. This workshop on 14th October 2024 focused on promoting essential tools that are readily available to advance national efforts with a particular emphasis on health and climate change. A presentation on the IPU-WHO online course on health taxes demonstrated how health taxes can combat non-communicable diseases.
517. Case studies from the Philippines and Lithuania illustrated the success of these taxes in reducing harmful consumption and generating revenue. Participants were encouraged to explore the online course to facilitate the implementation of such measures to improve national health outcomes. Another resource discussed was the IPU-WHO online course, *The Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians in Strengthening Health Security Preparedness designed to bolster legislative efforts in responding to health emergencies*. The session highlighted the importance of the International Health Regulations in enhancing legal preparedness.
518. Additionally, a framework guide on legal preparedness developed by the Global Health Security Agenda was introduced as a legal mapping tool to help identify gaps in health emergency preparedness. On the topic of climate change, the workshop featured an issue

brief on the impact of climate change on mountainous regions, published by the IPU and Adaptation at Altitude. It underscored the need for regional and global cooperation in managing cross-border environmental challenges. Discussions focused on the role of parliamentarians in advocating for climate adaptation measures and raising awareness of the vulnerability of mountainous areas. The issue brief was presented as a key tool for parliamentarians to identify critical areas for climate action.

519. The workshop concluded with an open dialogue, providing participants the opportunity to exchange insights on their capacity-building and knowledge needs. This exchange allowed for discussions on other existing and forthcoming practical tools to support efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants were encouraged to maintain engagement with experts and organizations to ensure continued progress in applying these tools effectively in their national contexts.

3. Panel Discussion on the theme Common Principles: Parliamentary development as a defence to democratic backsliding

520. A panel discussion was held on Common Principles: *Parliamentary development as a defence to democratic backsliding* on 14th October 2024. Given recent trends of democratic backsliding across the globe, the panel discussed how parliamentary development can be enhanced to bolster parliaments' resilience to backsliding. The discussion took place against the backdrop of the 10-year anniversary of the Common Principles for Support to Parliament which was commemorated throughout the 149th Assembly. It was moderated by Mr. J.d.D. Cincunegui, Deputy Director of the International Center for Parliamentary Studies, Research and Foresight (CIDEIPP) and Executive Director of the International Diploma in Parliamentary Diplomacy at the Universidad Austral of Argentina.
521. To kick off the event, Ms. Nyokabi. Kamau, Executive Director of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) in Kenya delivered a keynote address. Her speech focused on the challenges and proposed solutions to enhance parliamentary strengthening in line with each of the Common Principles. A number of respondents then took the floor to react to the presentation and share their own perspectives on backsliding, namely: Mr. R. Edwards of Chile, Ms. Thanda of Myanmar, Mr. S. Kawimbe of Zambia, Ms. M. Udina of European Parliament, Ms. K. Sample of National Democratic Institute and Mr. A. Read of the United Nations Development Programme.
522. Interventions by respondents and from the floor confirmed the challenges national parliaments face with democratic backsliding. The discussion highlighted the importance of support to bring parliaments closer to the people. Inclusion was key for parliamentary legitimacy and to effectively deliver. Participants also remarked on the importance of better leveraging new technologies to connect to the people while mitigating the risks they pose, particularly with regard to misinformation and its role in eroding trust in political institutions.
523. The importance of transparency in parliamentary work, as well as the role of parliamentary training institutes in bringing about sustainable outcomes for parliamentary development

were also underlined. The importance of parliamentary autonomy vis-à-vis the executive, particularly regarding financial matters, was also highlighted. In the concluding remarks, participants reaffirmed their support for the Common Principles as a guide to effective parliamentary development which in turn helps counter democratic backsliding. They also agreed to find more innovative approaches through capacity development to support their parliaments in restoring a cycle of trust and effective delivery for the people.

4. Workshop on Parliamentary leadership in disarmament: Preventing and alleviating human suffering caused by weapon proliferation

524. This workshop was held on 14th October 2024 and was chaired by Mr. B. Cotter of Canada. The workshop sought to empower parliamentarians with knowledge, tools and strategies to support humanitarian disarmament efforts focusing on people-centred approaches, preventing human suffering and promoting peace.
525. The session opened with a presentation from Mr. F. Ahmed, Legal Adviser at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of armed conflicts and emphasized the importance of international humanitarian law (IHL) in reducing the human cost of war along with its relevance in regulating the use of weapons that cause indiscriminate harm, particularly in urban areas. He also introduced the 2022 Political Declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas stressing the importance of parliamentary support for its implementation as well as for the ratification and implementation of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties.
526. Ambassador C.M. Foradori, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations in Geneva and President of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) 11th Conference of States Parties (CSP11) spoke on the successes and challenges of the ATT, which regulates the international arms trade. Focusing on the critical importance of the ATT, he outlined the treaty's role in preventing illegal arms transfers, with particular attention to conventional weapons.
527. With 115 countries having signed the ATT, Ambassador Foradori encouraged more nations to ratify it to ensure universal adoption. He urged parliamentarians to hold their governments accountable for implementing the treaty, ensuring it effectively prevents arms from falling into the wrong hands. Ms. K. Lawand, Executive-in-Residence for the Global Fellowship Initiative at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, spoke on behalf of Control Arms. Building on the Ambassador's remarks, she highlighted the gendered impact of weapon proliferation noting that women and children are disproportionately affected by armed violence. She emphasized the role of parliamentarians in ensuring that national implementation of the ATT includes provisions that address gender-based violence and reduce the harmful impacts of arms proliferation on vulnerable populations.
528. Ms. T. Gabelnick, Director of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition discussed the continued humanitarian crisis caused by landmines and cluster munitions, noting that these weapons are indiscriminate by nature and continue to

kill and wound civilians, particularly children, long after conflicts have ended. She urged parliamentarians to push for the universalization and strict implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. She also highlighted the financial and logistical challenges of demining efforts and called for increased international funding to speed up clearance operations and assist affected communities.

529. Mr. L. Dewaegheneire, an expert from the Stop Killer Robots campaign, presented on the emerging challenges posed by autonomous weapon systems. These weapons, capable of selecting and engaging targets without human intervention, present significant ethical and legal dilemmas. Mr. Dewaegheneire called for a legally binding instrument to prohibit the development and use of such weapons, underscoring the importance of maintaining human control over lethal force. He encouraged parliamentarians to take action by signing the campaign pledge and promoting national legislation to prohibit autonomous weapon systems.
530. The workshop concluded with a dynamic discussion among participants, where several important points were raised concerning the role of parliamentarians in disarmament. One participant shared their experience with the APMBC, emphasizing the crucial need for parliamentary oversight of arms exports to ensure compliance with disarmament goals. Concerns were also raised about the environmental impact of arms production, particularly regarding CO2 emissions and the challenges in controlling arms in conflict zones like the Syrian Arab Republic.
532. The need for greater transparency and accountability in arms transfers was another key issue, with calls for stronger international support in these efforts. Several valuable resources for parliamentarians seeking information and guidance on how to take concrete actions within their legislative roles were highlighted.
532. In closing, the panelists reaffirmed the vital role parliamentarians play in advancing disarmament, common security and human security and called on parliamentarians to advocate for stronger disarmament measures to reduce human suffering and promote global peace.

5. Workshop on whether parliaments tip the balance for sexual and reproductive health and rights

533. The workshop held on 15th October 2024, was organized with long-standing partners from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), with the aim to encourage constructive debate on improving access to sexual and reproductive health services and upholding underlying rights.
534. The workshop was opened by the IPU Secretary General and moderated by Mr. B. Aylward (WHO) and Mr. R. Khosla (PMNCH). They highlighted that sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are not comprehensively prioritized despite being important societal and human rights issues on which men and women must work together. Ms. B.

Ganatra of WHO shared the latest statistics on maternal mortality, access to family planning and modern contraceptive methods and gender-based violence. She stressed that real people are behind statistics and that solutions exist, calling for joint efforts to make SRHR a reality for everyone.

535. The panel discussion featured a presentation from Mr. N. Datta of the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, providing an overview of research findings on anti-gender movements. He highlighted the organised pushback on SRHR, gender and equality. He provided strategies to address this pushback, including capacity-building for staff and media, as well as considering how anti-gender issues are being used politically at the national and transnational levels.
536. His presentation was followed by country perspectives from Ms. C. Gotani Hara of Malawi, Ms. G. Katuta of Zambia and Ms. C. Dijksteel of Suriname. They reflected on the intersecting challenges creating barriers and diverting attention and resources from SRHR, especially poverty, inequalities, economic crises and climate change. They recognised the key role of education, in particular for young people, and the need to engage religious and traditional leaders. They called for better enforcement of existing legislation and for enhancing the parliament's budgetary role.
537. Lastly, a video contribution from Ms. J. Dukureh of *Safe Hands for Girls* presented the work of civil society organisations in the Gambia, which worked with the country's Parliament to uphold an existing ban on female genital mutilation. Contributions from the floor further stressed the role of political will and public engagement to raise awareness of existing legislation. Several participants expressed concern that growing climate-induced poverty and food insecurity are threatening the gains made in the area of family planning and child marriage. Participants agreed on the need to continue efforts to "push back on the pushback" and sustain gains made in the area of SRHR.

6. Open Session of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law on Armed Conflict and Disability: Enhancing parliamentary action to address disability during armed conflicts and their aftermath

538. The IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law held an open session debate on 15th October 2024 on Armed Conflict and Disability: Enhancing parliamentary action to address Disability during Armed conflicts and their Aftermath. The session featured Prince Mired of Jordan, Special Envoy for the universalisation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and President of the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Jordan, as the keynote speaker. Panelists included Ms. G. Smoeun, Spokesperson of Handicap International (Humanity & Inclusion); Mr. A. Breitegger, Senior Legal Adviser at the ICRC; and Mr. S. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso), Member of the Transitional Legislative Assembly.
539. The session was chaired by Mr. J.K. Waweru (Kenya), President of the Committee. The open session was organised within the framework of the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the APMBC. It addressed how parliamentary action can contribute to advancing

and ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities during armed conflicts and their aftermath, especially of those rendered disabled due to the use of weapons such as anti-personnel mines. Armed conflicts not only cause new disabilities but also exacerbate the existing barriers faced by persons with disabilities. For instance, anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other conventional weapons have the potential to directly render persons disabled.

540. According to the Landmine Monitor 2023, 4,710 mine-related casualties were recorded in 2022 and the threat of anti-personnel mines was observed in 60 countries and territories. Armed conflict also severely impacts persons with disabilities affecting their capacity to access basic services, emergency information and humanitarian assistance. Although an estimated 1.3 billion people experience some form of disability, persons with disabilities remain the “*forgotten victims of armed conflict*”.
541. Prince Mired discussed the origins and significance of the APMBC, emphasizing its role in addressing the needs of victims of anti-personnel mines. He called for increased awareness and action among parliamentarians to promote universalization of the Convention and support countries where persons are or have been affected by mines. He also called on parliamentarians to explore ways to contribute to the upcoming Global Disability Summit in 2025, as the first-ever gathering of world leaders on advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.
542. Ms. Smoeun, one of Humanity and Inclusion’s first beneficiaries in the 1980s shared her personal story of losing her leg to a landmine at the age of 10 in Cambodia and the challenges she faced in her recovery. Mr. Breitegger discussed the role of international humanitarian law (IHL) in protecting persons with disabilities during armed conflicts and highlighted the specific risks faced by these persons such as accessibility barriers, mistaken attacks and inaccessibility of humanitarian relief. He also called on parliamentarians to influence their respective governments to adopt pledges in the context of the upcoming 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for a disability-inclusive IHL framework.
543. Finally, Mr. Ouedraogo, one of the two representatives of persons with disability in the transitional parliament of Burkina Faso, provided an overview of the security situation in Burkina Faso and the impact of terrorism on persons with disabilities in the country. He discussed the legislative efforts of the Burkinabe Parliament to protect persons with disabilities, including the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the adoption of specific laws advancing disability rights.
544. Parliamentarians from different countries took the floor to share their experiences and call for increased parliamentary action to support persons with disabilities. Emphasis was placed on support for the universalization of both the APMBC and CRPD, the establishment of national legal frameworks providing assistance to mine victims, the allocation of budgets for rehabilitation and reintegration as well as for humanitarian aid to support persons with disabilities in emergency situations; and strengthening of

accountability for the violation of international obligations under the IHL, APMBC and CRPD frameworks.

545. The Secretariat of the CRPD Committee called on members of parliament to further the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all their decision-making processes and contribute with information to the Committee's General Comment on State obligations under Article 11 of the CRPD (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies), which is currently being prepared by the Committee. Mr. Ly Thuch, Senior Minister of the Government of Cambodia and current President of the APMBC, invited parliamentarians to participate in the 5th Review Conference of the APMBC taking place in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in November 2024.

7. Workshop on redoubling efforts to combat child labour and forced labour: What support can parliaments provide?

546. This event, held on 15th October 2024 is part of the regular awareness-raising campaign on child rights that the IPU conducts during its Assemblies. Eradicating child labour and forced labour is one of the core objectives of the IPU strategy to promote the rights of the child as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Speakers included Ms. A. Hauchère Vuong, Senior Specialist on Forced Labour, International Labour Organization (ILO); Mr. B. Smith, Senior Specialist on Child Labour, ILO; and Ms. L. Reynolds, Member of the Senate, Australia.
547. The meeting was moderated by Ms. S. Kiladze of Georgia, Vice-Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and IPU focal point. In his welcoming remarks, Mr. M. Chungong, IPU Secretary General, stressed the need to eradicate forced labour and child labour, two scourges that undermine the future of vulnerable populations that are unable to protect themselves. He underscored the need to harness the political will and commitment of parliamentarians to effectively use the legislative, budgetary and oversight powers granted to them by their constituencies.
548. Setting the tone of the discussion, Ms. Hauchère Vuong said that forced labour is a violation of fundamental human rights, involving severe forms of exploitation and abuse, physical, psychological, and sexual violence, and degrading working and living conditions that undermine human dignity. It affected some 28 million people, including domestic workers, migrant workers, women trafficked for prostitution, fishers and children used as soldiers in conflict areas. It also has significant economic and societal impacts. She underlined the critical role parliamentarians should play, including through ratifying international instruments and creating a conducive national framework against forced labour that promotes social protection, education and freedom of association.
549. Mr. Smith stressed the overlap between forced labour and child labour and differentiated between work done by children as part of their socialization and child labour that affects children's physical and mental development, namely hazardous forms of work. He pointed out the flexibility of the ILO Minimum Age Convention which takes into account the realities of different countries and said that the Convention exemplifies the global

community's determination to eradicate the worst forms of child labour. He highlighted the IPU's determining role in making it the first ILO convention to achieve universal ratification.

550. With 160 million children currently affected by child labour, he urged efforts to double down on and eradicate this scourge, emphasizing the critical role parliamentarians must play. Ms. Reynolds' presentation was preceded by a video on orphanage trafficking, highlighting the need to address the problem through education, legislation and advocacy. She made a specific plea for legislation on charity to orphanage institutions which were inappropriate environments for children's well-being.
551. Delegates from Chile, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tunisia, Benin, Andorra, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and India shared national practices to promote child rights, and underscored the need for measures in favour of social protection, education and the reinsertion of victims of child and forced labour. Delegates called for increased measures to criminalize child traffickers, particularly those targeting orphaned children.

8. Joint IPU and ASGP panel discussion: Committees of the future: The future of parliaments?

552. The objective of this panel discussion on 15th October 2024 was to learn from the experience of parliamentary committees of the future in different countries. Finland pioneered such committees in the 1990s and they are now found in a number of parliaments where they address long-term societal challenges through dialogue with the scientific community and civil society.
553. Mr. N. El Khadi, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) opened the session, highlighting the important role of parliamentary committees of the future in anticipatory governance. The moderator, Mr. E. Janse, Secretary General of the House of Commons of Canada, underscored the role of parliaments in shaping future policies and ensuring resilience against global changes. He also emphasized the importance of anticipating future challenges such as climate change, artificial intelligence and digitalization.
554. Mr. A. Koponen, former member of Finland's Committee of the Future, pointed out the importance of integrating foresight processes into decision-making, ensuring that legislation is flexible and resilient. He advocated for the expansion of future-oriented expertise in parliaments and for increasing global cooperation among future committees.
555. Mr. R. Goñi, Chair of the Committee of the Future in the Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay, spoke on the ambition of using the future to transform the present, thereby ensuring a better future for all. He explained how the Committee's working method has fostered strong cross-party dialogue, which has allowed the Committee to adopt numerous consensus-based reports.

556. Ms. A. Ferreyra from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) discussed the role of future oriented parliaments in accelerating human development. She emphasized the need for parliamentarians to actively question assumptions and beliefs about the future. She concluded by mentioning a new UNDP publication, which provides methodological support for developing anticipatory capabilities in parliament.
557. During a question-and-answer session, participants inquired about how coordination between committees of the future and other thematic committees takes place. Others raised concerns about differences in capacity between developed and developing countries to work on the future, and the need for support. The Third World Summit of Parliamentary Committees of the Future will take place in Chile from 13 to 14 January 2025, providing a platform for in-depth exchange of experience and good practices.

9. Parity debate on the theme Pushing back on the pushback: Men and women MPs preserving and advancing gender equality

558. On 16th October 2024, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians organized a parity debate with 92 participants, including 71 parliamentarians (54 women and 17 men) from 30 countries. The event aimed to foster dialogue between women and men, focusing on advancing gender equality in the face of rising challenges. Ms. F. Ilimi Haddouche of Algeria, First Vice-President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, presided over the session.
559. Contributions from 20 countries (16 women and 8 men) enriched the debate, providing diverse perspectives on key issues affecting women's rights worldwide. Ms. L. Nyirinkindi, Chair of the United Nations Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls shared a video message emphasizing the urgency of addressing the growing gender backlash and the critical role parliamentarians play in safeguarding women's rights. She drew attention to the reversal of laws in countries like Afghanistan and underscored the need for constant vigilance to protect the rights of women and girls.
560. During the panel discussion, Mr. S.S.K. Njie, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Gambia, shared insights on recent efforts in his parliament to reject a bill that intended to repeal the law banning female genital mutilation (FGM) and the need to raise awareness among parliamentarians about the harmful effects of FGM on women and girls. Ms. V. Riotton, panellist and MP from France spoke on the negative impact of financing anti-abortion movements and the wave of disinformation undermining women's reproductive rights.
561. The session also provided a platform for other parliamentarians to share their experiences in promoting gender equality. Several countries shared best practices for advancing women's participation in politics, banning FGM and child marriage, and reforming discriminatory nationality laws. Discussions also addressed gender-based violence and legislative changes aimed at protecting women and girls, demonstrating a collective commitment to pushing back against the setbacks faced in the fight for gender equality.

10. Panel discussion on Fostering Peaceful Coexistence: The IPU Science for Peace Schools

562. In this panel discussion on 16th October 2024, participants discussed the role of science and technology in driving societal transformation and addressing global challenges like water scarcity and climate change. They emphasised the importance of ethical governance to ensure that these innovations do not exacerbate conflicts, but instead harness the potential of science to turn elements of conflict into reasons for coexistence.
563. The discussion was opened and moderated by Ambassador M. Omar, Senior Advisor to the IPU Secretary General. Panelists included parliamentarians as well as heads and representatives of IPU partner organizations. Participants shared insights into the way ethical governance ensures that scientific advancements are leveraged not only to solve pressing global issues, but also to build bridges between communities, transforming areas of tension into opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit, thereby fostering peace and coexistence in an increasingly interconnected world.
564. The discussion further elaborated on the role of science diplomacy, a concept exemplified by international scientific research centres like CERN and SESAME. Participants reflected on the history behind these centres, which were established as beacons of collaboration in regions divided by political tensions. The IPU Science for Peace Schools and the IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology were highlighted as a reflection of the IPU's dual mission of ethical stewardship and practical application. The Charter sets out the principles by which science should be governed and the schools provide the practical knowledge that parliamentarians need to implement these principles in their legislative work.
565. Reflecting on the first edition of the Science for Peace Schools on water held in two separate sessions for parliamentary staff in December 2022 at CERN and for parliamentarians in September 2023 at the ICISE – and the Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 10th World Water Forum in Bali in May 2024, participants discussed the lessons learned from the inaugural Science for Peace Schools, emphasized the importance of following up on it and outlined potential next steps.
566. Participants also stressed the importance of aligning and integrating the IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology with the Science for Peace Schools in its second edition, emphasizing that these initiatives should work in tandem to offer a comprehensive framework for capacity-building among parliamentary staff and parliamentarians, particularly in addressing one of the most pressing challenges of the modern world artificial intelligence. The discussion also expanded into the concept of peace, drawing from the framework of the Institute for Economics and Peace which distinguishes between negative peace as the mere absence of conflict and positive peace which involves creating societal conditions that promote harmony, justice and equality.

567. Participants underscored the importance of applying these dual aspects of peace when formulating AI policies, as policy and lawmakers must not only mitigate risks like bias and inequality, but also harness AI's potential to foster cooperation and social cohesion.

11. Workshop on Data and evidence for decision-making and accountability in parliament

568. In a world of disinformation, fake news and increased mistrust in politics, a key question arises: How do parliamentarians get the data and evidence they need to make informed decisions and hold the government accountable? Furthermore, the complexity of today's challenges, the rapid pace of developments, their interconnectedness at global, regional, national and local levels, and the multiplication of stakeholders demand even greater access to comprehensive, reliable data and evidence for sound and impactful decision-making.

569. The workshop, held on 16th October 2024 and moderated by Ms. S. Attia, Vice-Chairperson of the IPU Working Group on Science and Technology (WGST) focused on the various data and resources available to parliamentarians, current practices within parliaments, and practical considerations regarding the selection and use of data for decision-making. Four expert panelists launched the debates. Mr. D. Naughten, WGST chairperson emphasized the crucial role of science-based research in parliamentary decision-making and presented the results of the survey Mapping engagement between parliament and science.

570. The importance of building relationships with experts, clearly communicating needs and respecting confidentiality through frameworks like the Chatham House Rule were highlighted. Notably, while a quarter of parliaments have established science-related caucuses, many still struggle to access useful scientific data. Ms. C. Fredriksen, Governance Manager of the International Organization of Supreme Audits (INTOSAI) Development Initiative underscored the importance of cooperation with Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs).

571. SAIs are a vital component in the accountability ecosystem of parliaments. Audit reports, compliance, and performance evaluations provide essential insights for budgetary processes and policy reforms across sectors like on debt management, resource mobilization, tax policies and environmental topics. The role of audits in revealing governance weaknesses and fostering a data-driven culture in legislative practices was stressed. 66% of SAIs do audits related to the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), presenting a valuable opportunity for collaboration between parliaments and SAIs on monitoring progress and achievement of goals.

572. Another key actor in the data and evidence ecosystem are national statistics offices. Ms. A. Wilde, Team Lead, UNDP Global Policy Centre for Governance noted that governance statistics can be politically sensitive, necessitating that national statistics offices operate independently and autonomously. While data may be generated, its effective dissemination varies by country. Civil society thus plays a crucial role in ensuring that data production is adequate and disaggregated to prevent marginalized groups from being overlooked.

573. There is a growing, innovative movement around citizen-generated data which offers essential insights for MPs to better understand their constituents' needs, warranting further exploration. Mr. I. Wamunyima Member of the National Assembly of Zambia, shared practical examples of how data is used in the Zambian parliament to legitimize decision making. The committee system is used to gather evidence from diverse sources including government ministries, civil society and research institutions to inform expenditures across sectors. The establishment of an independent parliamentary research department and budget office has helped provide non-partisan data to support informed discourse and decisions. Additionally, a monitoring and evaluation department utilizes raw data from 156 constituencies, and an e-parliament tool allows citizens to communicate their thoughts directly to MPs.
574. As various parliamentarians shared their experiences, it became evident that fostering relationships with research entities within and outside of parliaments and leveraging both quantitative and qualitative data are essential for informed policy-making. However, the sheer volume of information poses challenges and not all data is equally reliable. MPs must navigate competing narratives within the political landscape and discern which data to trust.
575. The workshop highlighted the need for parliaments to enhance statistical literacy with regular training for MPs on using research resources identified as a key priority in a poll held at the end of the workshop.

12. Open Session of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians

576. The first Open Session of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians was held on 16th October 2024. It brought together almost 80 participants including over 30 young MPs and 25 youth leaders from student organizations, youth parliaments and councils and youth advisory boards of international organizations, among others. The session was chaired by Mr. D. Carden of the United Kingdom, President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians.
577. During the meeting a spirited and interactive discussion took place between youth leaders and young parliamentarians. Youth leaders kicked off by taking the floor to share their priority issues in need of attention. Video contributions from youth leaders around the globe were also heard. Issues relating to climate change, health, employment and protecting young people impacted by conflict were among the many topics raised.
578. The session deliberated on how to co-create solutions. Suggestions included involving young leaders in youth parliaments and councils that work with parliaments as well as emphasizing the importance of political party youth wings. The role of young MPs in helping mentor youth aspirants and stimulate their interest in politics was also highlighted as was the importance of strengthening links with the research and academic community. It was agreed that youth inclusion was not just a right, but a necessity. Discussions concluded with wide agreement that the IPU should continue to provide a space for future

open discussions between youth representatives of civil society organizations and young MPs.

13. Media and Communication

579. The 149th Assembly was covered extensively in the media especially national outlets likely due to the large number of Speakers of Parliament in attendance. The Assembly saw a significant hike in engagement on social media especially on Instagram. As at previous Assemblies, hundreds of hard copies of IPU publications including four new publications in multiple languages were displayed at the communications booth and picked up by delegates.
580. The IPU issued seven press releases over the 10-day period. The 149th Assembly was reported in some 3,400 media outlets, an increase compared to around 3,200 during the 148th IPU Assembly at the time of writing and likely to increase as more media articles are published once delegates return home. Much of the coverage was in Middle Eastern or Eurasian media. About 10,000 people watched the live feed of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, the Governing Council and the Assembly, a decrease compared to the 15,000 views during the 148th Assembly.
581. During this Assembly, the feed was picked up by some parliamentary television channels, notably in India, where Sansad Television brought the Assembly to new audiences. The provision of video extracts of plenary speeches during the general debate was again a popular service with delegates. By the end of the Assembly, the communications team had prepared over 20 video clips to send to individual MPs for their own amplification purposes.
582. The social media wall continued to be a popular feature, with many parliamentarians joining the conversation using the hashtag #IPU149. Some 500 individuals used the hashtag and were featured on the wall, mostly from X (formerly Twitter). The communications team published 124 tweets on X over the Assembly period, leading to 102,000 impressions (the number of times a post appears on somebody's feed). Some 3,100 X accounts engaged with IPU content.
583. Over 2,200 accounts mentioned the IPU's X account @IPUParliament, meaning the Assembly week had the highest number of mentions since the account was launched. The IPU also gained 277 new followers on X. Interactions on LinkedIn surged over the 10-day period, with an engagement rate of 10% and 8,000 impressions. During the Assembly, the communications team invested particularly in video to populate the IPU Instagram account, a platform that is seeing growing traction among young MPs and influencers.
584. Significant time was also invested in the sharing of content from participants' accounts and collaborating with MPs on their own posts which boosted numbers. The investment paid off: 259 posts resulted in over 268,000 impressions or views compared with 124,000 impressions in March 2024. Total views of the daily stories alone were 64,000. Over the course of the Assembly, the IPU Instagram account gained over 1,200 new followers, with

the account now being followed by over 15,000 people. On Facebook, the IPU's posts reached some 19,000 accounts compared with 14,000 at the last Assembly. A total of 53,000 accounts viewed the IPU profile.

585. Three photographers covered 64 sessions and produced hundreds of high-quality photographs as well as providing personal service to certain MPs. Viewing figures for the photographs on the IPU's Flickr account were in the hundreds of thousands.

PART 7

7. THE 149TH ASSEMBLY DECLARATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

587. The 149th Assembly on 17th October, 2024 considered and endorsed declarations and made resolutions on subjects as follows:

1. Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future

We, Members of Parliament from around the world, gathered together at the 149th IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, reaffirm our commitment to harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) to address the pressing global challenges of our time and to advance peace, sustainable development and human rights.

We are meeting at a time of unprecedented technological advancement and interconnectedness. From the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and the urgent need to combat climate change, to the persistent digital divide and the ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies, the multifaceted opportunities, challenges and risks we face underscore the need for parliaments to take urgent collective and forward-looking action, informed by common ethical standards regarding STI development and governance. We note that some nations have already taken bold decisions to pre emptively ban certain inhumane technologically advanced weapons, creating a good practice precedent. The challenges we face demand a shared global commitment to leveraging STI for the common good.

We conclude this Assembly recognizing the potential of STI, when guided by ethical principles and inclusive governance, as a powerful means for building trust, promoting cooperation, bridging divides and enhancing the contribution of parliaments and parliamentarians to build a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable world. We welcome the work of the IPU to foster dialogue and cooperation on issues related to STI and we commit to continue and expand these efforts.

We note with satisfaction that the themes of science, technology and innovation permeate the important commitments adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024, namely the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations. We are committed to working closely with the executive branches of our governments, the United Nations system and civil society on implementing these commitments.

As representatives of the people, we parliamentarians are keenly aware of our responsibility to ensure that the benefits of STI reach all segments of society, to bridge the technological divide between and within nations, communities, genders and generations, and to find consensus on how to overcome the challenges posed by rapid technological change.

We recognize that parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to develop and implement ethical frameworks for STI governance, ensuring that scientific and technological progress aligns with human rights standards and societal values, and contributes to the well-being of all.

Parliaments must address the complex challenges of an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world, leveraging strategic foresight to anticipate future trends, opportunities and risks. Parliaments have an important role to set legal boundaries, establish accountability mechanisms and prevent uses of technology that lead to human rights violations, exacerbate inequalities or undermine the rule of law and democratic processes.

We must pay particular attention to the situation of women, youth and groups in vulnerable or marginalized situations who risk being left behind in the digital age and recognize the vital role they can and should play in shaping the future of STI. Parliamentary action is crucial in empowering all sections of society to participate in and benefit from technological advancements. Parliaments must address the specific needs of these groups by embracing inclusive technological solutions that simultaneously preserve dignity, uphold rights, reduce exposure to digital risks and provide the conditions for them to realize their socioeconomic potential.

We especially commit to fostering the more substantial involvement of women and youth in STI, including in education, public health, research, innovation and technology governance and to the effective implementation of gender-responsive and youth-inclusive STI policies by ensuring that technological development processes integrate diverse perspectives and guarantee the equal and meaningful participation of all segments of society.

We reiterate our commitment to evidence-based and efficient policymaking and to fostering a culture of scientific inquiry and innovation. We urge all States to invest in research and development, promote international science diplomacy, and adhere to global standards for responsible innovation. We advocate for increased recourse to scientific expertise in parliamentary decision-making processes as an essential mechanism for addressing complex global challenges.

We recognize the close link between STI, peace and development. The ethical and inclusive application of STI is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, building resilient societies and strengthening accountability. Conversely, the misuse of or unequal access to technology can exacerbate existing inequalities and conflicts, or risk creating new ones.

Our focus should be on harnessing STI to tackle the underlying causes of global challenges, which are often rooted in socioeconomic exclusion, inequality, discrimination, lack of access to education and environmental degradation. We should increase our focus on leveraging technology to enhance human security, which encompasses citizens' protection by addressing essential needs such as food security, healthcare, shelter, education – including digital literacy – political security, environmental sustainability and climate action. STI can also be harnessed to anticipate and mitigate the impacts of natural hazards and public health emergencies.

We must monitor the potential risks and challenges posed by emerging technologies and take necessary and pre-emptive action to mitigate negative impacts, foster responsible innovation and ensure compliance with international standards and ethical principles. In this vein, we recognize

the importance of ethical AI development, cybersecurity and digital privacy protection to ensure the peaceful use of technology that is grounded in human rights. In particular, we commit to ensuring a safe online environment to prevent harassment, bullying and cybercrime, particularly when they are gender-based. Particular attention must be paid to addressing, through regulation and targeted policy, the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and AI-generated content that propagates hate speech, as these can undermine public trust and threaten social cohesion.

Today's technological challenges transcend borders and demand a collective global response. As members of parliament, we agree on the importance of international cooperation in STI governance. It is only through collaborative efforts and upholding ethical standards that we can bridge the STI gap between and within nations, address growing technological risks, build digital solidarity, strengthen common security and trust to reduce tensions, find lasting solutions to establish a shared sense of security and prosperity in the digital age, and strengthen worldwide collaboration and exchange in scientific knowledge development and related technological innovations.

We reconfirm our commitment to inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation on STI issues. We emphasize the IPU's unique role in fostering global parliamentary cooperation on STI governance. We welcome the adoption of the IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology and IPU resolution on the impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We further acknowledge the reports, recommendations and guidelines on digital transformation and AI that have been developed through the IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliament, including the World e-Parliament Report 2024. We commit to work for the implementation of these new standards.

We pledge to take this Declaration back to our respective parliaments, disseminate the outcome of our collective work to our national authorities and seek to implement its principles through legislative, budgetary and oversight actions.

As parliamentarians, we commit to lead the way towards a more equitable, sustainable and technologically advanced world, pursuing informed, inclusive and innovative approaches to STI governance. We therefore pledge to do our utmost, individually and collectively, to harness the power of science, technology and innovation for the benefit of all humanity and the preservation of our planet.

2. The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law

Resolution

The 149th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Reaffirming international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, and recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Recognizing that rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) may provide significant opportunities and challenges for humanity, with impacts, including on human rights, experienced differently between nations,

Acknowledging that greater knowledge and understanding of AI systems is a prerequisite for informed debate and decision-making, including the following considerations:

- a) ongoing initiatives that call for a balanced, inclusive and risk-based approach to the governance of AI, as a means to achieve an open, sustainable, fair, free and secure future for all,
- b) the methods by which AI systems are trained and deployed, which have the potential to entrench existing societal prejudices, discrimination, biases and inequalities, both within developing countries as well as between developing and more developed countries,
- c) the ways in which AI can facilitate the spread of false or misleading information, discrimination, and extremism leading to misinformation, disinformation, distrust and online violence, as well as AI-facilitated gender-based violence against women, including women serving in politics, all of which undermines the credibility of democratic institutions and actors, posing significant challenges to public discourse and societal trust.

Noting that advances in AI have impacts on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, including by facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation which can undermine democratic institutions, incite extremism and violate personal rights to privacy and data ownership, all of which may disproportionately affect children, women and girls, as well as disabled persons,

Aware that, at the same time, AI technologies, if developed and harnessed in a responsible manner and made available to all, can have a positive impact on democracy, including through increasing the accountability and transparency of public institutions, and facilitating citizens' engagement in political processes,

Highlighting the risk of AI widening economic inequalities on a global scale,

Acknowledging that an inclusive, responsible, human-centric and evidence-based approach to setting rules that mitigate risks pertaining to the creation, development, deployment and use of AI technologies is required in order to ensure equitable policy outcomes for the entire world, including the Global South and countries which may face unique challenges caused by disparities in keeping up with the rapid pace of AI development and deployment,

Stressing that, in the absence of gender-balanced perspectives, data and decision-making, AI technologies, in particular generative AI, can create, perpetuate and amplify gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination and violence,

Noting that AI-generated deepfake material can negatively impact all women, and that for women in politics, these impacts often have the effect of silencing and excluding them from public and political life,

Concerned by the lack of comprehensive legislation, regulations and a globally agreed upon framework for the responsible creation, deployment and use of AI technology, and by the slow pace of the global community in developing these rules, and underlining the need for transparency and respect for democratic values in AI development,

Acknowledging the importance of regulating AI without constraining the emergence of responsibly developed and managed innovations that positively benefit humanity,

Alarmed that big technology companies have lobbied extensively to influence and set rules that may primarily benefit them, and to assert their control over training data sets and thus the technological development of AI for the foreseeable future to the detriment of the global community and the preservation of individual rights, including through the manipulation of personal data, unethical business marketing, non-socially responsible behaviour and algorithmic biases that reinforce existing inequalities and discrimination,

Noting that countries may already have existing legislation and regulations that could be adapted to meet emerging challenges and opportunities relating to AI, and that the principle of national sovereignty should be recognized in any initiative to regulate AI,

Noting also numerous international and regional initiatives to develop ethical standards and governance frameworks for AI, and that any such initiatives should employ a multi-stakeholder approach that guarantees a broad consensus across the global community,

Applauding the welcome efforts of key international organizations to assist parliamentarians and other actors in developing regulatory frameworks and policies:

- a) *Calls* for increased international multi-stakeholder cooperation, collaboration, and exchange of information and experiences to ensure a united worldwide effort to maximize the benefits of AI, while mitigating risks to humanity, including through initiatives designed to reduce disparities in technological development between nations;
- b) *Calls* for urgent measures to bridge the divides among and within countries in terms of digital infrastructure, connectivity and skills, including by removing digital gender barriers and scaling up international digital cooperation, as a precondition for equitable and inclusive access to AI benefits for all;
- c) *Insists* on the inclusion of perspectives from, and the equal participation of, all countries of the world in debates on AI standards, frameworks and other governance mechanisms, while emphasizing the need for the active presence of the Global South;
- d) *Calls* upon parliaments to effectively and transparently adopt or maintain strong legal frameworks and policies for the responsible creation, deployment and use of

AI technology, and to contribute to efforts to establish global standards and frameworks;

- e) *Recommends* that these legal frameworks set out requirements for transparency and information in the implementation of AI systems, affirm the accountability of the public and private entities who use them, and provide recourse for victims whose rights are violated by AI technology;
- f) *Invites* parliaments, in cooperation with civil society groups, academia and research groups, to give priority to reviewing existing legislation and regulations to ensure that advances in AI technology do not result in loopholes in existing protections for democracy, human rights, the rule of law and State sovereignty;
- g) *Urges* parliaments to prioritize the prevention and elimination of, and response to, all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination generated or facilitated by AI, including better content moderation, accessible and effective reporting mechanisms and the establishment of procedures to remove illegal content;
- h) *Calls* on parliaments, with a view to enhancing gender mainstreaming in the development of AI, to promote legislation and policies aimed at enabling and increasing girls' and women's access to education, careers and leadership in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
- i) *Invites* parliaments to ensure that advances in AI do not result in the perpetuation of discrimination stemming from biases present in training data and algorithms;
- j) *Urges* legislative action to prevent the creation and distribution of deepfake intimate images, recognizing that most of such content is pornographic in nature and disproportionately targets women and girls, as well to as to prevent the distribution of other AI-generated content that propagates hate speech or incites violence, including gender-based violence;
- k) *Calls* for the development, deployment and accessibility of new and existing tools to help people verify the provenance and authenticity of AI-generated images and content, to protect data privacy, and to prevent the misuse of personal information and data;
- l) *Calls* upon parliaments to promote AI systems that advance, protect and preserve linguistic and cultural diversity, taking into account multilingualism in their training data and throughout the life cycle of the AI system;
- m) *Urges* parliaments to place a high priority on debates related to AI and to ensure their policy responses evolve in line with advances in AI technology, so as to ensure these responses are conducive to the well-being of humanity and the principles of sustainable development;

- n) *Calls* on parliaments to strengthen their capacity to proactively address rapid technological developments, particularly in the AI field, including through: training programmes for members of parliament and staff; the establishment of specialized bodies; innovative formats for policy dialogues with the technical and academic communities, the private sector and all other stakeholders; and platforms for enhanced inter-parliamentary cooperation and sharing knowledge, good practices and solutions related to AI;
- o) *Calls* for the development of effective strategies to address the impact of AI on the labour market, including education, training and measures to mitigate the effects of automation on specific job sectors and to provide support to affected individuals;
- p) *Urges* parliaments to cooperate with their governments in raising the awareness of citizens on the impact of AI on democracy, human rights and the rule of law;
- q) *Calls* for increased and ongoing education and capacity-building on the uses and risks of AI, including for parliamentarians, to keep pace with quickly evolving technological developments;
- r) *Calls* upon parliaments to accelerate efforts to tackle information privacy violations caused by the use of unacceptable AI practices, such as AI-enabled surveillance and biometric categorization technology in unwarranted political surveillance and personal data collection, which threatens citizens' fundamental rights and individual freedoms, thereby weakening democracy and the rule of law;
- s) *Urges* parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to advocate against international decoupling of data sets and AI models in order to prevent censorship and the walling in of individual systems, and to make AI as inclusive, culturally open and nuanced as possible;
- t) *Notes* the need for independent research on AI, guided by high ethical standards;
- u) *Calls* for the promotion of sustainable research and development in the field of AI, encompassing innovations designed to address global challenges related to human rights, particularly in the areas of epidemic prevention, public health enhancement, educational development and climate change mitigation; *Urges* the enhancement of transparency and accountability in the deployment of AI by establishing standards that require companies to disclose their data usage and decision making processes involved in AI applications;
- v) *Calls* for the development of specific cybersecurity standards for AI to safeguard systems against cyberattacks and bolster the security of personal and sensitive data;
- w) *Invites* the Inter-Parliamentary Union, given the crucial role of parliaments in achieving internationally agreed AI commitments, to explore modalities of

providing a parliamentary input to AI-related processes at multilateral organizations;

- x) *Urges* parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to continue to focus attention on the responsible development, deployment and use of AI, including through capacity-building initiatives and establishing linkages with relevant global initiatives, as a critical goal of their work.

3. Response by parliamentarians to the urgent plea by the UN Secretary-General to recommit to multilateralism for global peace, justice and sustainability

The 149th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Deeply concerned that, at the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 2024, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: “Our world is in a whirlwind. We are in an era of epic transformation – facing challenges unlike any we have ever seen – challenges that demand global solutions. Yet geo-political divisions keep deepening. The planet keeps heating. Wars rage with no clue how they will end. And nuclear posturing and new weapons cast a dark shadow. We are edging towards the unimaginable – a powder keg that risks engulfing the world”, echoing his warning just two years earlier, on 20 September 2022, when he underscored his increasing despair at the state of global affairs, saying: “Our world is in big trouble. Divides are growing deeper, inequalities are growing wider, challenges are spreading faster... We need hope... We need action across the board”,

Alarmed that the UN Secretary-General has also consistently described numerous times in recent years international action on major challenges as being “paralyzed by dysfunction and held hostage to geopolitical tensions”,

Fully comprehending the UN Secretary-General’s concerns of a world destabilized by interconnected crises driven by impunity, inequality and uncertainty, which threaten global stability and solidarity and undermine the collective commitment to the principles of multilateralism,

Comprehending the dire circumstances facing the world, which motivated the UN Secretary-General to call on the international community to mobilize collectively to address these crises, uphold human rights and work towards sustainable solutions,

Preoccupied by the erosion of global commitments to democratic values and universal human rights,

- a) *Reaffirms* its unwavering support for multilateralism, both through the United Nations system and other key global and regional institutions, and its attachment to an international order based on the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as laid out in the Pact for the Future;

- b) *Fully* respects that the United Nations remains the cornerstone of the multilateral system and of international cooperation and pledges its full support to its mission through a deepening cooperation;
- c) *Highlights* the gravity of the challenges the global community is facing, from a growing number of international conflicts to the consequences of climate change and the risk of pandemics, as well as other global threats like famine and food insecurity, resulting in a multiplication of humanitarian crises;
- d) *Emphasizes* the urgent need for a collective response, founded on renewed political will, to cooperate at the international level and to share responsibilities across geopolitical divisions, to build a more peaceful world and create a better future for current and succeeding generations;
- e) *Calls* for a significant concerted effort by the international community, including the IPU membership, to achieve:

- complete rejection of the indiscriminate targeting by armed forces of civilians, wherever they may be, particularly emergency personnel, health and education workers, and medical, education and other public infrastructure, which represents a grave breach of international humanitarian law based on the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols;
- the end of sexual violence, war crimes against women and girls in international and domestic conflicts; greater recognition of the insidious impact of gender discrimination and the undermining of women's rights; and the identification of urgent remedies to address these phenomena;
- concerted action to end the appalling impact of conflict on children, who are experiencing unacceptable levels of death and injury in war, forced displacement and kidnapping, loss of education and economic opportunity, and the wanton destruction of their families and wider communities;

- d) *Expresses* its full commitment to-

- strengthen multilateralism by working tirelessly to uphold and reinforce the multilateral frameworks that are essential for addressing global challenges, including undertaking the necessary reforms to ensure the legitimacy and efficiency of the multilateral system, such as: the expansion of the membership of the Security Council, ensuring fair and balanced representation of all regions of the globe; the modernization of UN peacekeeping tools in compliance with the New Agenda for Peace; and the reform of international financial institutions;
- promote equity and justice by advocating for food security and fair access to resources, including water and health supplies, and strive to bridge the gaps which perpetuate inequality and poverty to ensure that no one is left behind,

especially the most vulnerable in our communities, particularly women and girls, people with disabilities and the elderly;

- tackle the climate crisis by pursuing ambitious climate action in line with the Paris Agreement, fully appreciating that the urgency of the situation requires immediate and sustained efforts to reduce emissions and support climate resilience, particularly through financial support for developing countries;
 - defend the rights of all people by being champions for the protection and promotion of universal human rights, ensuring that the fundamental freedoms and dignity of all individuals are respected and upheld, including by rebuilding faith in the integrity of independent accountability and human rights institutions;
 - call for action against impunity for international crimes;
 - rebuild trust by addressing misinformation on both social and traditional media and by addressing the new challenges posed by rapidly developing advances in artificial intelligence and other technologies;
 - foster inclusive dialogue, particularly encompassing the most vulnerable in our societies, to enhance global prospects for cooperation based on collective values, shared principles and common objectives in the interests of all peoples;
- e) *Resolves* to raise awareness that a recommitment to the cause of multilateralism and the collective efforts of the international community through the United Nations and other global institutions is a critical move in stepping back from the brink of a geopolitical abyss of increasingly violent conflict, social injustice and economic decline, which, without a change in course, threatens all countries;
- f) *Underscores* the full relevance of the founding principles of the IPU in its 135th year of existence in favour of the pursuit of peace and cooperation through worldwide parliamentary dialogue, and reaffirms its commitment to deepening parliamentary cooperation with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions;
- g) *Highlights* the obligations of Member Parliaments to ensure legislators hold to account their respective national governments to show full respect for the Charter of the United Nations, redouble their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to fully implement the newly adopted Pact for the Future, which also seeks to deepen cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations;
- h) *Reaffirms* its commitment to the defence of the principles of peace, human rights, dignity, equality, justice and solidarity, and confirms the determination of Member Parliaments to play a key role in navigating the complexities of current crises, to recommit to the purposes and principles of multilateralism, and to contribute to

building a more resilient, just and sustainable world for the benefit of every nation and the constituents of all parliamentarians.

PART 8

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to Article 7 of the IPU Statutes, the National Assembly delegation to the 149th IPU Assembly and related meetings held in Geneva, Switzerland from 13th to 17th October, 2024 recommends to the House to:

- (i) **Take note of this report; and**
- (ii) **Implement parts of the Declarations and Resolutions of the 149th IPU Assembly and Related meetings where applicable.**



.....
Hon. Millie Odhiambo, M.P.
Leader of Delegation

This 4th day of December 2024

ANNEXURE 1

**Minutes on consideration of and adoption of
this report**

MINUTES OF THE SITTING OF THE KENYAN DELEGATION TO THE 149TH ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION AND RELATED MEETINGS (13TH TO 17TH OCTOBER, 2024, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND) HELD VIRTUALLY ON TUESDAY, 3RD DECEMBER, 2024 AT 4.00 PM

PRESENT:

- 1) Hon. Millie Odhiambo, M.P. - *Chairperson*
- 2) Hon. John Kiarie, M.P.
- 3) Hon. Naisula Lesuuda, M.P.
- 4) Hon. Rabecca Tonkei, M.P.
- 5) Hon. Geoffrey Mulanya, M.P.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. George Gazemba, ACI Arb, CPM - *Ag Deputy Director*

MIN No. 01/2024: PRELIMINARIES

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 4.10 p.m. followed by a word of prayer from Hon. Rabecca Tonkei, M.P.

MIN No. 02/2024: CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

There was one agenda item for the meeting which was consideration and adoption of the report of the Kenyan delegation to the 149th Assembly and related meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held from 13th to 17th October, 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. The agenda of the meeting was adopted having been proposed by Hon. Geoffrey Mulanya, M.P. and seconded by Hon. Naisula Lesuuda, M.P.

MIN No. 03/2024: CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE KENYAN DELEGATION TO THE 149TH ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION HELD FROM 13TH TO 17TH OCTOBER, 2024 IN GENEVA SWITZERLAND

The meeting considered and unanimously adopted the report of the Kenyan delegation to the 149th Assembly and related meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held from 13th to 17th October, 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. The adoption was proposed by Hon. John Kiarie and seconded by Hon Rabecca Tonkei.

MIN No. 04/2024 ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4.35 pm.

SIGNED:  DATE: *December 20 2024*

(CHAIRPERSON)

ANNEXURE 2

Calendar of IPU meetings for the Year 2025

Calendar of future meetings and other activities

*Approved by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th session
(Geneva, 17 October 2024)*

Regional seminar for parliaments and State Audit Institutes co-organized with the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI)	Saint Lucia 29 – 31 October 2024
10th G20 Speakers' Summit (P20)	BRASILIA (Brazil) 6 – 8 November 2024
Parliamentary meeting at COP29	BAKU (Azerbaijan) 16 – 17 November 2024
Parliamentary event at the SUN Movement Global Gathering	KIGALI (Rwanda) November 2024 (Dates to be confirmed)
Regional Conference for parliaments of the Asia-Pacific region on Global Health Security	BANGKOK (Thailand) 2 – 3 December 2024
Workshop for members of parliamentary human rights committees from French-speaking countries that have recently or will soon be reviewed by the Human Rights Council	GENEVA (Switzerland) 4 – 5 December 2024
Regional seminar on promoting the rights of the child for the parliaments of West Africa (ECOWAS)	ABUJA (Nigeria) 12 – 13 December 2024
Parliamentary Track at the Internet Governance Forum 2024	RIYADH (Saudi Arabia) 16 – 17 December 2024
Multistakeholder conference on gender equality in nationality laws	GENEVA (Switzerland) December 2024 (Dates to be confirmed)
Regional seminar for West and Central African transitional parliaments	2024 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Joint event with UNFCCC on climate finance <i>(preparation for COP29)</i>	Virtual 25 September 2024
African regional dialogue on climate action co-organized with UNEP	Virtual 2 October 2024
Webinar on <i>Compliance audits: Building arguments for improving systemic weaknesses in governance</i> <i>(as part of the Webinar series on types of audits organized in cooperation with INTOSAI Development Initiative)</i>	Virtual 7 November 2024
Webinar on <i>How to develop parliamentary library services based on the needs of customers</i> . Jointly organized by the IPU and IFLAPARL	Virtual 12 November 2024
Webinar on <i>Performance audits: Audits as input for sector policy development and dialogue</i> <i>(as part of the Webinar series on types of audits organized in cooperation with INTOSAI Development Initiative)</i>	Virtual 26 November 2024
Webinar series on human security and common security with partners including the International Peace Bureau and the World Academy of Art and Science	Virtual (Series dates to be announced)

Series of workshops on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, as well as military expenditure, co-organized with partners including Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and the Parliamentary Forum for Small Arms and Light Weapons	Virtual 2024 (Series dates to be announced)
Series of briefings for parliaments of countries that will be reviewed in 2023 and early 2024 by the UN Human Rights Council under its Universal Periodic Review; by the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; and by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Virtual Regular webinars throughout 2024
Webinar series on public engagement in the work of parliament, in follow-up to the 2022 Global Parliamentary Report	Virtual 2024 (Series dates to be announced)
Webinar series on digital transformation in parliaments, organized by the IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliament	Virtual 2024 (Series dates to be announced)
Webinar series: Global empowerment series for young parliamentarians: Briefings and training courses	Virtual 2024 (Quarterly)
Series of regional and global virtual webinars on gender equality and women's empowerment	Virtual 2024 (Series dates to be announced)
Webinar for parliaments whose countries will submit Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to track progress on the Sustainable Development Goals	Virtual 2024 (Dates to be confirmed)
Series of online briefings for MPs on the United Nations organized by the IPU Permanent Observer Office to the United Nations in cooperation with relevant UN departments and missions (as needed)	Virtual 2024 (Series dates to be announced)
Webinar series for parliamentarians on combating hatred based on religion or belief organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in cooperation with the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB)	Virtual 2024 (Series dates to be announced)
Third Summit of Parliamentary Committees of the Future	Chile 14 – 15 January 2025
Regional seminar organized in cooperation with UNODA on the universalization of major treaties to prohibit WMDs	GENEVA (Switzerland) 10 – 11 February 2025
2025 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations	NEW YORK (USA) February 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
54th session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO	BRUSSELS (Belgium) February 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Parliamentary Meeting and side events on the occasion of the Commission on the Status of Women	NEW YORK (USA) March 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
First Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians	Mexico March 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)

150th Assembly and related meetings	TASHKENT (Uzbekistan) 5 – 9 April 2025
Parliamentary event at the 10th UN Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (UN STI Forum)	NEW YORK (USA) 7 or 8 May 2025 (Date to be confirmed)
Parliamentary event at the World Health Assembly	GENEVA (Switzerland) May 2025 (Date to be confirmed)
Second Science for Peace School on <i>Understanding the ethics of artificial intelligence</i>	SESAME, ALLAN (Jordan) May 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue	ROME (Italy) 19 – 21 June 2025
SDG regional seminar for the parliaments of the Eurasia Group	ASHGABAT (Turkmenistan) June (Dates to be confirmed)
Parliamentary Forum at the 2025 UN HLPF (High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development)	NEW YORK (USA) 22 July 2025
15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, prior to the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament	BERN (Switzerland) 28 July 2025
Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament	GENEVA (Switzerland) 29 – 31 July 2025
55th session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO	YAOUNDÉ (Cameroon) 2025 (Dates in the first half of the year to be confirmed)
Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (PCWTO) preceded by the PCWTO Steering Committee	YAOUNDÉ (Cameroon) 2025 (Dates in the first half of the year to be confirmed)
Second Science for Peace Parliamentary Meeting on <i>Regulating Artificial Intelligence: Ethics and the IPU Charter</i>	ICISE, QUY NHON (Viet Nam) September 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
151st Assembly and related meetings	GENEVA (Switzerland) 19 – 23 October 2025
Regional seminar on combating violence against women in parliament in the Asia-Pacific region on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women	November 2025 (Venue and dates to be confirmed)
Regional seminar for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from Latin America and the Caribbean, co-organized with the World Trade Organization (WTO)	GEORGETOWN (Guyana) 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Seventh interregional seminar on the SDGs	BEIJING (China) 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Information seminar on the structure and functioning of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for English-speaking participants	GENEVA (Switzerland) 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Parliamentary Meeting at COP30	Brazil 2025 (Dates and venue to be confirmed)

World e-Parliament Conference	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar for parliamentarians from South Pacific Islands on the promotion of Nuclear Security instruments (CPPNM, 2005 amendment and ICSANT)	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar on climate action and sustainable development for parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Third regional seminar for African parliaments on achieving the SDGs	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar on countering terrorism and violent extremism for the African Group	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar on countering terrorism and violent extremism for the Eurasia Group	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Working together to advance women's political participation and decision-making: Series of in-person and online meetings between parliamentarians and partners in the Generation Equality Forum	Quarterly 2025 Venue to be confirmed
Eleventh Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Fourth regional seminar for the Twelve Plus Group on achieving the SDGs	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar on countering terrorism and violent extremism for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar on promoting the rights of the child for the parliaments of the East and South Asia region	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar in the Sahel region, for the implementation of the Call of the Sahel	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Regional seminar to promote implementation of the legal framework on counter-terrorism for the Twelve Plus Group	2025 Venue and dates to be confirmed
Virtual follow-up session to the Second Science for Peace Schools on <i>Understanding the ethics of artificial intelligence</i>	Virtual June 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Webinar to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism	Virtual 21 August 2025
Virtual follow-up session to the Second Science for Peace Parliamentary Meeting on <i>Regulating Artificial Intelligence: Ethics and the IPU Charter</i>	Virtual November 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Information Seminar on the structure and functioning of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for Spanish-speaking participants	Virtual 2025 (Dates to be confirmed)
Webinar series on promoting the Model Legislative Provisions to support the victims of terrorism	Virtual 2025 (Series dates to be announced)
Virtual roundtable on climate action in mountains	Virtual 2025 (Date to be confirmed)
Series of online briefings for MPs on the United Nations organized by the IPU Permanent Observer Office to the United Nations in cooperation with relevant UN departments and missions (as needed)	Virtual 2025 (Series dates to be announced)

ANNEXURE 3

Amendments to the IPU Statues and Rules

9. The Prize Selection Board may unanimously decide not to award the Cremer-Passy Prize in a given year whenever unforeseen circumstances emerge (force majeure).
10. Members of the Prize Selection Board shall not score nominees from their own geopolitical Group.
11. If Members of the Prize Selection Board are unable to score the nominees within the given deadlines, their votes will be distributed equally among all nominees (except those from their own geopolitical group).
12. The IPU Secretariat shall make all the necessary arrangements to hold the meeting stipulated in paragraph 6.5 above.

Article 7

The prize to be awarded consists of a trophy with an appropriate inscription.

Article 8

All persons involved in the award procedure shall keep all nominations confidential.

Article 9

1. The periods referred to in these Rules shall be counted in working days.
2. In the event that the country of any IPU Member has a public holiday on 30 June, that day, for the purposes of the submission of nominations laid down in Article 4.1, shall be considered a working day.

Article 10

To ensure the implementation of the present Rules, which govern the Cremer-Passy Prize, it shall be mandatory that the annual IPU Budget has a specific allocation for the Cremer-Passy Prize.

Article 11

Any amendments to the present Rules shall be adopted by the Governing Council and take effect for subsequent editions of the Prize.

Article 12

The above rules shall constitute the whole Rules of Procedure for the Cremer-Passy Prize.

IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology

*Adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 214th Session
(Geneva, 17 October 2024)*

Preamble

Reaffirming the Inter-Parliamentary Union's commitment to peace, democracy and development, and *convinced* that scientific knowledge and expertise should substantively inform the efforts of parliamentarians, parliamentary researchers and decision and policymakers to attain the goals,

Reaffirming also the calling and commitment of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to prioritize a common understanding of science, placing humanity at its core, and to foster ethical considerations in the realm of science and technology, leveraging its platform to promote informed discussions, exchange good practices and develop frameworks that align scientific progress with ethical principles,

Acknowledging the profound impact of science and technology on humanity's progress, welfare and environment, the ethical responsibilities inherent in the pursuit and application of scientific knowledge, and the importance of ethical considerations in guiding the development, deployment and governance of emerging technologies,

Acknowledging also the persistent inequality between the Global North and South in accessing, benefiting from and contributing to scientific and technological progress, and the inherent gender, social and economic inequalities therein, and *emphasizing* the need for ethical frameworks that address these disparities and strive for equitable global participation, including youth participation, gender equality and social equality in accessing knowledge and contributing to advancements,

Recognizing the imperative for global collaboration and adherence to ethical principles in shaping the trajectory of scientific and technological advancements, mitigating their potential risks for the betterment of present and future generations without distinction and discrimination of any kind,

Recognizing also the profound influence of science and technology on societies, with the potential for both beneficial and adverse effects, the need for parliaments and parliamentarians to safeguard the interests of the people they serve and the ethical complexities inherent in the advancement of science and technology for the benefit of all humanity,

Taking into account the imperative of respecting the diversity of religions, beliefs, cultures and civilizations, of treating different social groups with fairness, equity and inclusiveness, and avoiding discrimination and biases in the pursuit and governance of scientific and technological advancements,

Recognizing the crucial need to safeguard and protect humanity from the potential risks and hazards inherent in scientific and technological advancements, including the risk of compromising human agency, autonomy and democratic principles, and from humanity being disempowered by present and future technological advancements,

We, parliamentarians present at the 149th IPU Assembly in Geneva, adopt the following Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology, to serve as a framework of ethical principles to uphold the dignity, human rights and well-being of individuals and societies, while fostering innovation, sustainability and responsible stewardship of scientific and technological endeavours, sharing of knowledge, advocacy for policies that promote ethical practices in science and technology, and the harmonization of progress with the values and aspirations of our constituents and the global community. We urge governments, parliaments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, academic and research institutions, and all other relevant actors around the world to be guided by its content.

PART I: Key ethical principles for regulating science and technology

In order to establish a comprehensive ethical framework, it is important to first clarify the scope of science as addressed by the present Charter. Science is referred to as a collective endeavour to advance knowledge and innovation across multiple fields, each contributing uniquely to the understanding, improvement and protection of human life and the environment, encompassing diverse disciplines such as natural, social and applied sciences.

Article 1 – Duty, responsibility and rational decision-making

Parliaments and parliamentarians are endowed with the significant responsibility of crafting laws that promote societal values, well-being, human fulfilment and harmony. This responsibility underscores the importance of rational and evidence-informed decision-making in the legislative and anticipatory governance process. To achieve this, proactive understanding, assessment, shaping and regulation of scientific and technological developments, while considering their long-term impacts and ethical ramifications, are of the utmost importance.

Article 2 – Rule of law

Acknowledging the foundational importance of the rule of law in enacting ethical principles for scientific and technological advancements, science and technology must be developed and applied within the framework of the rule of law at the national and international levels. Any development of science and technology should adhere to the ethical principles of equality, fairness, accountability and justice, established national and international legal principles, and human rights standards enshrined in international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Due process should guide the governance of technological innovation and its integration into societies. Upholding the rule of law safeguards against arbitrary use of power, fosters transparency, and promotes responsible behaviour in scientific and technological domains, ensuring alignment with ethical principles and societal well-being.

Article 3 – Preservation of research freedom and independence

Scientific curiosity, intellectual freedom and independence are fundamental values of research, requiring the autonomy of scientific enquiry to be upheld and protected, with ethical considerations guiding the process to ensure responsible and morally sound practices throughout scientific endeavours. Researchers have the right and liberty to explore, investigate and disseminate their findings without undue influence, censorship or restrictions that inhibit the pursuit of knowledge and the advancement of scientific understanding. This includes safeguarding intellectual property rights and the rights of researchers to choose methodologies, pursue innovative avenues of enquiry, and communicate their results transparently and responsibly to contribute positively to societal progress and the common good.

Article 4 – Transparency and accountability

Promoting transparent processes in scientific research, technological development and policymaking entails holding all involved parties accountable for their actions. It necessitates clear communication regarding the objectives, methodologies, outcomes and limitations of scientific research, as well as the reasoning behind policy decisions leading together to more comprehensive and inclusive public policy outcomes. Engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including but not limited to scientists and researchers, ethicists, industry experts and civil society representatives in policy dialogue is essential, in order to ensure that scientific knowledge is properly integrated into political decision-making. Particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence and robotics, this principle underscores the need for clarity, transparency and human oversight to ensure societal well-being.

Article 5 – Data and privacy

The ethical handling of data is a critical pillar in mitigating the risks of scientific and technological advancements, including emphasizing the importance of responsible management and use of data and advocating for robust frameworks that prioritize and protect the privacy rights of individuals, while harnessing the potential of data for societal progress. The ethical handling of data entails transparent data practices, informed consent and mechanisms to ensure accountability for data misuse. Cooperation and collaboration among nations is pivotal to establishing international standards for ethical data practices, fostering a future where scientific and technological advancements align with the ethical principles and values upheld by different societies.

Article 6 – Risk assessment and management

Scientific and technological advancements must be subject to regular evaluation for risks, including in relation to any unintended consequences emerging from their use. Effective strategies should be put in place to manage, communicate and address risks as an essential component for maintaining public trust, for safely integrating new technologies into societies and for mitigating any harm caused to various societies, in both the Global North and Global South. Ensuring protection against foreseeable risks is integral to the responsible development, deployment and use of technological advancements. This approach will contribute to the creation of safer and more resilient technological and digital landscapes in societies.

Article 7 – Continuous learning and adaptation

Acknowledging the rapid evolution of science and technology, the establishment of responsive policies and regulations founded on continuous learning is of crucial importance. This approach advocates for an iterative policymaking process that evolves in response to new information and changing circumstances. It emphasizes the need for ongoing learning, capacity-building, critical thinking and education that keeps pace with technological advancements and leads to the review and revision of standards, laws and regulations.

Article 8 – Preservation of peace and harmony

The primary objective of legislation and policymaking, including in the area of technological advancements, must be to ensure integral and lasting peace, understanding and cooperation among individuals and nations. The fundamental goal of these legislative and policy endeavours remains the fostering of harmonious relations, both within societies and across borders, underscoring the importance of steering technological advancements in a direction that not only serves human progress but also actively contributes to the development of humanity, global peace and international cooperation. While science can be used to advance national or regional interests, it should also stand as a unifying force transcending geopolitical boundaries, enabling mutual

understanding and cultivating shared endeavours among nations. This includes leveraging the transformative potential of science in fostering diplomacy through dialogue, better international understanding, trust and collective problem-solving.

Article 9 – International cooperation

Humanity is a community with a shared future. Acknowledging that science transcends borders and should serve for the collective benefit of humankind, it is essential to strengthen worldwide collaboration and exchange in scientific knowledge development and related technological innovations, their ethical considerations, the assessment of impacts and mitigation of risks. Guided by principles of mutual respect, justice, equality, equity and non-discrimination, all countries and scientific research entities must have equal access to participate in international scientific and technological cooperation through inclusive and transparent international institutions. Any attempt to politicize, instrumentalize or militarize such cooperation must be firmly opposed. Countries must uphold genuine multilateralism, explore new models for global technological cooperation and partnerships that are mutually beneficial, and ensure that the achievements in scientific and technological innovation benefit humanity.

Article 10 – Sustainability and environmental stewardship

Recognizing the growing impact of technology on the environment, and ensuring that scientific and technological advancements are sustainable and environmentally benign, is of paramount importance. It is important that relevant actors advocate for and incentivize the development of technologies that contribute to the long-term sustainability of our planet, and call for international collaboration in formulating model regulations and international agreements that balance ecological sustainability with human rights, human integrity and human dignity.

Article 11 – Social justice and equity

A commitment to a fairer and more equitable distribution of the benefits of scientific and technological advancements across societies must underpin the work of all parliaments and governments. This approach addresses concerns that technology may exacerbate social inequalities, by ensuring that vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and the poorest and most marginalized, are not overlooked, and advocating for technology to serve as an enhancer of human capabilities for all, actively combating societal disparities and ensuring equal access to knowledge for all.

PART II: Guidelines and recommendations for legislators

Legislators should endeavour to:

1. Recognize the importance of maintaining, and promoting the creation of, parliamentary and inter-parliamentary structures for the presentation of regular, neutral and evidence-based information to parliamentarians on science and technology, including the provision of advice on the relevant ethical aspects of technological development.
2. Periodically interact with relevant national, regional and/or international competent organizations on the ethics of science and technology, to acquire the best and most up-to-date understanding of the ethical implications of ongoing research, studies and applications, as well as of the most probable future scenarios, as presented by scientists and technologists.
3. Periodically interact with relevant national, regional and/or international competent organizations with expertise in the field of ethics, to obtain diverse perspectives on current and future scientific and technological developments, including humanistic and philosophical points of view. This interaction and these exchanges will help to define the evolving ethical limits that science and technology must not exceed with regard to respect for human rights, human integrity and human dignity.
4. Make available in a usable format to parliamentarians evidence-based and validated information provided by "technical" internal parliamentary science and technology advisory bodies for specific consultations with competent organizations or groups of experts on ethics. This will provide parliamentarians with a solid basis to establish the ethical limitations when considering new legislation or amending and updating existing laws.

ANNEXURE 4

**The IPU Charter on Ethics, Science and
Technology**

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Parliaments and parliamentarians are endowed with the significant responsibility of crafting laws that promote societal values, well-being, human fulfilment and harmony. This responsibility underscores the importance of rational and evidence-informed decision-making in the legislative and anticipatory governance process. To achieve this, proactive understanding, assessment, shaping and regulation of scientific and technological developments, while considering their long-term impacts and ethical ramifications, are of the utmost importance.

Article 2 – Rule of law

Acknowledging the foundational importance of the rule of law in enacting ethical principles for scientific and technological advancements, science and technology must be developed and applied within the framework of the rule of law at the national and international levels. Any development of science and technology should adhere to the ethical principles of equality, fairness, accountability and justice, established national and international legal principles, and human rights standards enshrined in international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Due process should guide the governance of technological innovation and its integration into societies. Upholding the rule of law safeguards against arbitrary use of power, fosters transparency, and promotes responsible behaviour in scientific and technological domains, ensuring alignment with ethical principles and societal well-being.

Article 3 – Preservation of research freedom and independence

Scientific curiosity, intellectual freedom and independence are fundamental values of research, requiring the autonomy of scientific enquiry to be upheld and protected, with ethical considerations guiding the process to ensure responsible and morally sound practices throughout scientific endeavours. Researchers have the right and liberty to explore, investigate and disseminate their findings without undue influence, censorship or restrictions that inhibit the pursuit of knowledge and the advancement of scientific understanding. This includes safeguarding intellectual property rights and the rights of researchers to choose methodologies, pursue innovative avenues of enquiry, and communicate their results transparently and responsibly to contribute positively to societal progress and the common good.

Article 4 – Transparency and accountability

Promoting transparent processes in scientific research, technological development and policymaking entails holding all involved parties accountable for their actions. It necessitates clear communication regarding the objectives, methodologies, outcomes and limitations of scientific research, as well as the reasoning behind policy decisions leading together to more comprehensive and inclusive public policy outcomes. Engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including but not limited to scientists and researchers, ethicists, industry experts and civil society representatives in policy dialogue is essential, in order to ensure that scientific knowledge is properly integrated into political decision-making. Particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence and robotics, this principle underscores the need for clarity, transparency and human oversight to ensure societal well-being.

Article 5 – Data and privacy

The ethical handling of data is a critical pillar in mitigating the risks of scientific and technological advancements, including emphasizing the importance of responsible management and use of data and advocating for robust frameworks that prioritize and protect the privacy rights of individuals, while harnessing the potential of data for societal progress. The ethical handling of data entails transparent data practices, informed consent and mechanisms to ensure accountability for data misuse. Cooperation and collaboration among nations is pivotal to establishing international standards for ethical data practices, fostering a future where scientific and technological advancements align with the ethical principles and values upheld by different societies.

Article 6 – Risk assessment and management

Scientific and technological advancements must be subject to regular evaluation for risks, including in relation to any unintended consequences emerging from their use. Effective strategies should be put in place to manage, communicate and address risks as an essential component for maintaining public trust, for safely integrating new technologies into societies and for mitigating any harm caused to various societies, in both the Global North and Global South. Ensuring protection against foreseeable risks is integral to the responsible development, deployment and use of technological advancements. This approach will contribute to the creation of safer and more resilient technological and digital landscapes in societies.

Article 7 – Continuous learning and adaptation

Acknowledging the rapid evolution of science and technology, the establishment of responsive policies and regulations founded on continuous learning is of crucial importance. This approach advocates for an iterative policymaking process that evolves in response to new information and changing circumstances. It emphasizes the need for ongoing learning, capacity-building, critical thinking and education that keeps pace with technological advancements and leads to the review and revision of standards, laws and regulations.

Article 8 – Preservation of peace and harmony

The primary objective of legislation and policymaking, including in the area of technological advancements, must be to ensure integral and lasting peace, understanding and cooperation among individuals and nations. The fundamental goal of these legislative and policy endeavours remains the fostering of harmonious relations, both within societies and across borders, underscoring the importance of steering technological advancements in a direction that not only serves human progress but also actively contributes to the development of humanity, global peace and international cooperation. While science can be used to advance national or regional interests, it should also stand as a unifying force transcending geopolitical boundaries, enabling mutual

understanding and cultivating shared endeavours among nations. This includes leveraging the transformative potential of science in fostering diplomacy through dialogue, better international understanding, trust and collective problem-solving.

Article 9 – International cooperation

Humanity is a community with a shared future. Acknowledging that science transcends borders and should serve for the collective benefit of humankind, it is essential to strengthen worldwide collaboration and exchange in scientific knowledge development and related technological innovations, their ethical considerations, the assessment of impacts and mitigation of risks. Guided by principles of mutual respect, justice, equality, equity and non-discrimination, all countries and scientific research entities must have equal access to participate in international scientific and technological cooperation through inclusive and transparent international institutions. Any attempt to politicize, instrumentalize or militarize such cooperation must be firmly opposed. Countries must uphold genuine multilateralism, explore new models for global technological cooperation and partnerships that are mutually beneficial, and ensure that the achievements in scientific and technological innovation benefit humanity.

Article 10 – Sustainability and environmental stewardship

Recognizing the growing impact of technology on the environment, and ensuring that scientific and technological advancements are sustainable and environmentally benign, is of paramount importance. It is important that relevant actors advocate for and incentivize the development of technologies that contribute to the long-term sustainability of our planet, and call for international collaboration in formulating model regulations and international agreements that balance ecological sustainability with human rights, human integrity and human dignity.

Article 11 – Social justice and equity

A commitment to a fairer and more equitable distribution of the benefits of scientific and technological advancements across societies must underpin the work of all parliaments and governments. This approach addresses concerns that technology may exacerbate social inequalities, by ensuring that vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and the poorest and most marginalized, are not overlooked, and advocating for technology to serve as an enhancer of human capabilities for all, actively combating societal disparities and ensuring equal access to knowledge for all.

PART II: Guidelines and recommendations for legislators

Legislators should endeavour to:

1. Recognize the importance of maintaining, and promoting the creation of, parliamentary and inter-parliamentary structures for the presentation of regular, neutral and evidence-based information to parliamentarians on science and technology, including the provision of advice on the relevant ethical aspects of technological development.
2. Periodically interact with relevant national, regional and/or international competent organizations on the ethics of science and technology, to acquire the best and most up-to-date understanding of the ethical implications of ongoing research, studies and applications, as well as of the most probable future scenarios, as presented by scientists and technologists.
3. Periodically interact with relevant national, regional and/or international competent organizations with expertise in the field of ethics, to obtain diverse perspectives on current and future scientific and technological developments, including humanistic and philosophical points of view. This interaction and these exchanges will help to define the evolving ethical limits that science and technology must not exceed with regard to respect for human rights, human integrity and human dignity.
4. Make available in a usable format to parliamentarians evidence-based and validated information provided by "technical" internal parliamentary science and technology advisory bodies for specific consultations with competent organizations or groups of experts on ethics. This will provide parliamentarians with a solid basis to establish the ethical limitations when considering new legislation or amending and updating existing laws.

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