

Summary

The meeting opened at 10.15 am in conference room 1 in the United Nations General Assembly building in New York. It was attended by more than 70 members of the ASGP, senior parliamentary staff and interpreters. The list of attendees is at Appendix A.

Mr Ian Harris, President of the ASGP, welcomed delegates and asked for a brief time of silence as a tribute to the victims of hurricane Katrina. He then introduced Senator Sergio Páez Verdugo of Chile, the President of the IPU and invited Senator Páez to address the meeting. Senator Páez said it was significant that Secretaries General and Speakers of Parliaments from throughout the world were meeting just before the Leaders' Summit and all meetings would consider some common themes albeit from different perspectives. This presented an opportunity for Parliaments of the world to contribute to, and understand, international policies especially those concerning the United Nations.

Senator Páez noted that secretaries general were a vital element in legislatures and called on delegates to make a decisive contribution to improving and updating the process of law making to support a more dynamic involvement by parliaments in world affairs. The technical and legal contribution of secretaries general was an important aspect of this process. Senator Páez referred to the more proactive work being done by the ASGP and hoped it would continue. Mr Harris thanked Senator Páez for his encouraging words.

The business of the meeting then commenced and changes to the draft agenda to accommodate a presentation to the meeting by Dr Robert Orr, the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning were considered. Mr Michael Wetzee (South Africa) moved and Mr Hans Brattesta (Norway) seconded the adoption of the amended agenda (copy at Appendix B).

Mr Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the IPU, then addressed the meeting giving an expansive commentary on matters concerning the international responsibilities of parliaments, particularly in relation to the United Nations, and the role of the IPU. He commenced with a report on the Speakers' meeting due to commence later in the day and noted that the President of the General Assembly, Mr Jean Ping (Gabon) would represent Mr Kofi Annan at the meeting and that Mr David Dryer (Chairman of the Rules Committee of the House of Representatives of the United States Of America) would represent Speaker Hastert.

Mr Johnsson reported that the steering committee for the Speakers' meeting had agreed to changes to the procedural rules to allow a Deputy Speaker to address the meeting where no Speaker was present. Mr Johnsson expressed regret that in relation to two countries, Speakers had been unable to attend because they could not obtain visas. Mr Johnsson stressed that this was a serious incident. Problems in extending the "usual courtesies" (regarding visas to participants) included in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (attached at Appendix C), had arisen because the United States was not hosting the meeting. Therefore there was no additional assistance for delegates seeking visas to attend. Mr Johnsson said the IPU would pursue the matter.

The draft resolution to be considered at the Speakers' meeting had also been changed to accommodate suggestions relating to human rights and UN management reform, and were made because of the belief that political support from the Speakers could be helpful. The text of the resolution as adopted is at Appendix D.

Mr Johnsson then commented on aspects of the draft resolution to be considered by the Heads of Governments' summit to be held later in the month. He expressed concern about negotiations regarding the paragraph dealing with cooperation between parliaments and the UN and whether or not this would include a reference to the IPU. The Speakers' meeting steering committee proposed that all Speakers talk to their government representatives about this issue. Mr Johnsson urged secretaries general to raise the matter with their Speakers to try to get support for retaining a paragraph referring to the IPU.

Finally, Mr Johnsson referred to proposals to establish new parliamentary assemblies and noted that Speakers gathering for their meeting were being lobbied on this issue. He asked that Speakers not support any such proposals as they undermined the role of the IPU and were inconsistent with the views in the resolution the Speakers were themselves proposing to sign.

As no further time was available for this agenda item, Mr Johnsson invited delegates to approach him at the end of the meeting if they had any questions about the Speakers' meeting or other matters.

Mr Harris then introduced Dr Orr to speak on the first agenda item: **The Process of Reform of the United Nations, in the light of the report "In larger Freedom"** by the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr Annan.¹ After referring to the situation in Niger, Dr Orr noted that the meeting was being held at a crucial time, not just in the life of the UN but in relation to future prospects of multi-lateralism. Dr Orr considered that parliaments have a significant role to play in furthering the concept of solutions through multi-lateralism. At the same time he referred to the damage done to the idea of multi-lateralism by incidents such as those relating to the current oil for food program being addressed by the Security Council.

Dr Orr said that the draft document to be considered by the 191 member governments of the UN at the summit of Heads of Governments and States (scheduled to commence on 13 September 2005) represented a balanced package relating to such important topics as human rights and UN reform. He hoped negotiations over the final document would be conducted in such a way that all governments would recognise the importance of the topics. He noted that the success of the summit was by no means guaranteed and was in the hands of governments. Further, the final document would only be as effective as its implementation.

Dr Orr then gave a brief overview of the major issues addressed in "In larger Freedom" to be considered by the forthcoming summit.

In relation to **social and economic development** the most significant issues were: reaching the 0.7% of gross domestic product development assistance goal;

¹ **Note on "In larger freedom"**: The term "in larger freedom" is from the preamble to the United Nations Charter and is intended to convey the idea that development, security and human rights go hand in hand.

the millennium development goals²; climate change; gender equality and trade and debt relief. He noted that the stakes are very high and not all goals would be reached in the short term. Nevertheless simply reaching agreement was itself an important goal. In this context Dr Orr noted that there was increasing convergence on addressing development. The European Community had recently committed to the 0.7% target by 2015 (representing a sum of \$50 billion).

The major **peace and security** issues included the "old threats" of war and peace and international and intranational responses, but also new issues such as the proposed Peace Building Commission. Dr Orr was optimistic about the prospects of this goal which he said would help countries transit from war to peace with UN help. As well as political assistance, the UN, governments, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the regional development banks would work in partnership to help states achieve peace.

In relation to terrorism Dr Orr considered there are signs of an emerging consensus which is very significant. The collective community is working towards a comprehensive convention on terrorism. Even though there remained a problem with a definition, governments were working towards a solution to this difficulty and demonstrating a commitment to concluding an agreement. The outcome would be a common agenda on terror.

Negotiations on the control of weapons of mass destruction had proved difficult and a conference several months ago had not gone well. Dr Orr noted that the nuclear debate had to be put back on the right track. Further, there was a need to move forward on questions of biological and chemical threats. These were some of the more difficult areas for the summit but it was necessary to make some progress on them.

In commenting on the issue of **Human Rights and the Rule of Law** Dr Orr noted that the meetings of secretaries general embodied the rule of law. He noted that increasing democratisation brought with it a greater respect for human rights and expressed an interest in seeing increasing convergence and agreement on the importance of the rule of law. In relation to human rights, the report "In larger Freedom" proposed a new Human Rights Council to replace the Human Rights Commission. He discussed the perception that the commission was operating in a manner other than originally conceived. At the same time he noted that the commission had some proud achievements and these should not be forgotten. These traditions should be carried forward to the new council. The proposal was for a council which would be a subsidiary of the General Assembly and report directly to it - rather than be a part of the Economic and Social Council. Furthermore, the new council would be a standing body with meetings throughout the year instead of the current two sessions a year with additional incremental meetings.

Dr Orr's final topic was **institutional change and the United Nations**. He noted that struggles over the enlargement of the Security Council were unlikely to reach a conclusion before the Leaders' summit scheduled for 14 - 16 September 2005. Substantial debate will continue after the summit proving that people perceive that the Security Council is a body that makes a difference. Dr Orr observed that a fundamental restructure of the secretariat is needed including a new management

² Eight millenium development goals were set by the UN in 2000 to address the needs of the world's poorest people. They range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by a target date of 2015.

system. He referred to the bold proposals put forward by the Secretary-General including revitalising the structure of the General Assembly to allow it to play a more substantive role in the political, economic and social issues of the day (see footnote 1 on p. 1). Dr Orr pointed out that the Economic and Social Council and every other major UN body is on the table for reform. While the Security Council was providing the headlines this year, the World Summit of Leaders and the associated Speakers and Secretaries General meetings would make a difference in the year and decade ahead.

Dr Orr concluded with the observation that big decisions were in the offing. While there was hope for positive outcomes, help was needed in setting the agenda as well as achieving outcomes.³

Following Dr Orr's presentation there was a general debate on the next agenda item - a general debate on "**Bridging the democracy gap in international relations and the concept of a parliamentary dimension of the United Nations**". This topic reflected the agenda of the Speakers' conference (see Appendix D). The IPU prepared a paper on the topic, the executive summary of which is at Appendix E. The basis for the discussion at the ASGP meeting was a paper prepared by Mr Anders Forsberg, a member of the Executive Committee of the ASGP and Secretary General of the Swedish Riksdagen (copy at Appendix F).

Mr Forsberg introduced the topic by speaking to his paper, emphasising the need to develop further the connection between Parliaments and the UN to provide a parliamentary dimension to the UN. There was a need to investigate how parliaments can breach the democracy gap in international relations. He noted that in this context a parliamentary assembly of the UN had been discussed but the real question for the present was how to organise better, existing agencies and the links between them. If the draft resolution to be considered by the Speakers was adopted, this would rule out extra parliamentary assemblies and focus on fruitful cooperation between national parliaments, the UN and the IPU.

Further, if the IPU is the key to this cooperation there was a need to get the best and most qualified MPs to participate in specific activities. Ideally, MPs who go to conferences should be those who deal with the specific subject matter in their parliamentary work. There is a great deal of expertise within parliamentary committees and this could feed into the international contribution of parliaments. It was also important to involve those officials in parliaments who have the competence to support the MPs in this role. The result would be a valuable experience for staff of national parliaments who can bring outcomes back to the daily work in their committees.

Mr Forsberg highlighted the section in his paper which focused on a role for the IPU in helping achieve this by encouraging more direct cooperation between the secretariat in Geneva and the national parliaments through the Speakers and the secretaries general. In stressing the need for fruitful cooperation between Members of Parliament and the IPU, Mr Forsberg considered that small IPU secretariats in parliaments could be a key. There should also be more cooperation between the relatively small but effective secretariat in Geneva and the impressive competence that exists in national parliaments around the world. Such increased

³ **Note:** The document for consideration by the leaders at the world summit was finalised on 13 September and was not expected to be changed by the summit.

interaction would also mean that the IPU would be more interesting and relevant to its members.

Discussion on Mr Forsberg's paper followed. Mr Hans Brattesta (Secretary General of the Norwegian Storting) supported the concepts in Mr Forsberg's paper. On the role of the IPU he considered that it could never be the Parliament of parliaments - this was not its role. At the same time the IPU needed to be strengthened and this might be accomplished by using the expertise of the national parliaments.

Mr Brattesta did not think the answer to strengthening parliamentary input to international affairs was to keep adding parliamentary assemblies. Nor could the IPU cover all aspects which were relevant to parliaments in their international roles. A solution was to use existing expertise within parliaments, particularly within standing committees, and to strengthen the IPU's coordinating role as suggested by Mr Forsberg. Mr Brattesta noted that the IPU cannot take care of the parliamentary dimension of the UN on its own. This function must be served in different ways including having members of parliaments in delegations to the General Assembly.

Mr Brattesta concluded by emphasising that in any modern democracy foreign policy is not just the preserve of the government. Governments need to consult with parliaments on important issues being brought before the UN. It is difficult for governments to act internationally without the support of their parliaments.

Mr Colin Cameron (Secretary General of the Assembly of the Western European Union) spoke to his written comments on Mr Forsberg's paper which he supported (copy at Appendix G). Mr Cameron said the European Union was considering parliamentary oversight of a number of issues - most recently on how parliaments were involved in decisions by governments on the deployment of troops.

Mr Muhammad Rafiq, Acting Secretary of the National Assembly of Pakistan, made a formal presentation on the agenda item. Mr Rafiq spoke of the importance of the IPU's observer status at the UN and the opportunity this provided for promoting democracy as the UN created stronger links with the legislative branches of countries. He stressed the importance of multiculturalism in engaging ordinary people in their parliaments and the importance of education to link cultures and nations. Mr Rafiq ended with the observation that the opportunity for change should be used to encourage peace and harmony. Stronger links between the IPU and the UN should benefit development.

Mr Ari Hahn, Secretary General of the Israeli Knesset, then commented on Mr Forsberg's arguments for establishing closer relations between national parliaments and the UN through the IPU and through increasing the role of parliaments in international relations. Though Mr Hahn welcomed closer collaboration between the IPU and the UN he urged caution in relation to the ASGP getting involved in issues and activities that are not directly related to the running of parliaments. Mr Hahn considers that the IPU should concentrate on dealing with problems faced by parliaments. The ASGP's main contribution should be to improve the way parliaments operate and interact with the public and help new democracies to establish efficient legislatures. Mr Hahn considers it the role of ministries and specialised agencies to try to resolve international problems, rather than the job of elected representatives and administrators.

In relation to comments about harnessing the expertise of members of parliaments in relation to international conferences, Mr John Clerc, Secretary General of the Federal Assembly of Switzerland, noted that while this was an interesting idea it would be difficult to achieve in practice. Indeed the question of the competence of members was itself difficult to determine and it might be thought that the very fact of their election made them equal.

Dr Hafnaoui Amrani, Secretary General of the National Council of Algeria considered that rather than focussing on UN reform the ASGP should be talking about reform of the IPU. He asked for more cooperation between the secretariat of the IPU and the secretariats of parliaments. Dr Amrani said that secretaries general were the cornerstones of parliaments but they were not always fully informed. He requested meetings between the IPU secretariat and secretaries general during conferences for the purpose of sharing information, even though he acknowledged that the staff of the IPU secretariat were very busy during conferences. He suggested scheduling a meeting with secretaries general between conference sessions.

Dr Amrani also considered that the work done by regional parliamentary organisations should be taken into account. His comments led to the suggestion that the topic might be the subject of further consideration during a general debate at the forthcoming ASGP meeting in Kenya.

In response to comments on IPU reform, Mr Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the IPU said that debate on reform of the IPU commenced at the meeting in Amman, Jordan in April 2000. The basic premise of the discussion was that if the IPU was to add value to the UN it needed to be able to reach those members of parliaments who are experts in the areas in which the IPU has an interest. This led to the establishment of assembly standing committees. The basic idea of these standing committees was that when there was an agenda item on a topic such as human rights, parliaments, through whatever mechanism they have, would send members with expertise and experience in the subject as part of their parliamentary work. If there is a parliamentary committee on a particular topic (for example a standing committee on human rights) parliaments would look towards that committee to nominate members to join the delegation. Mr Johnsson noted that this is not, in fact, how parliamentary delegations are formed. From that perspective the point of the exercise was lost.

Mr Johnsson noted that other approaches to the same end were more productive. He referred to the forum organised in 2004 by the IPU for members of parliament with expertise in human rights, who were brought together to share their expertise with their counterparts in other parliaments. A second such forum was held in 2005. Mr Johnsson described the forums as "fabulous" and noted that his view was shared by experts in the subject from the UN who participated. Mr Johnsson commented that if Robert Orr were to be asked what the UN wanted from parliaments in the field of human rights, this sort of contact with experts in the area would be the response. Mr Johnsson went on to say that the parliaments themselves had to provide this expertise; it would not come from the IPU except in a supportive and coordinating role. This approach was the underlying logic of the declaration which was prepared for the Speakers.

Mr Johnsson asked secretaries general to help the Speakers turn the approach into a reality by finding appropriate ways to achieve results. Mr Johnsson

concluded by congratulating the ASGP on the meeting which he said was very valuable.

As there was no further time for debate on Mr Forsberg's paper, Mr Harris informed delegates that the usual practice would be followed, in that those who had prepared written comments could submit them for inclusion in the summary of the meeting. Mr Oscar Yabes, Secretary of the Philippines Senate, submitted a short paper. In it he noted the significance of the ASGP having a general debate on subject items directly related to the agenda of the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments. He considered this strengthened the ASGP's mandate as a consultative body of the IPU and provided an impetus for the ASGP to play a more participatory role in the work of the IPU. In commenting on the relationship between parliaments and the UN, Mr Yabes supported the view of the IPU and others that the UN's plans to create other inter-parliamentary structures as conduits for cooperation would subjugate the work of the IPU. Further, it would undermine the important principle of the separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches of government. Mr Yabes supported the views of Mr Forsberg in stressing the importance of harnessing the expertise within parliamentary secretariats to research and produce studies on technical issues to help members of parliaments to develop policies which would maximise the benefits of participation in the IPU, the UN and other international organisations. Parliamentary delegates to the UN General Assembly also have a role to play in encouraging useful links between legislatures and international organisations.

Mr Forsberg then responded further to Dr Amrani, noting that the topic of UN/IPU cooperation was important for secretaries general as well as Speakers of parliaments.

In response to Mr Clerc, Mr Forsberg said that in contributing to a consultant's report about the future of the IPU (for which he had been a member of the panel) his response to all questions about the future of the IPU was that it should focus on issues on which the IPU had a unique perspective. He remained convinced the IPU can play a role in supporting parliamentary democracy. There was the capacity for bringing together members of parliament with specialist knowledge and in relation to projects such as cooperation with the World Trade Organisation, this was needed, rather than input from generalists. This was not a role that could be expected of IPU delegations, though Mr Forsberg respected their achievements at IPU conferences. The IPU needed to bring together members of parliaments with specialist expertise as well as parliamentary officials with such expertise for specific technical purposes in the international arena, as a separate exercise to IPU conferences.

The time available for the meeting having ended, Mr Harris thanked the IPU secretariat, particularly Mr Johnsson, Mr Chungong and Ambassador Filip, for supporting the meeting. He also thanked the interpreters, engineers and UN administrative staff for their assistance. Finally, he thanked ASGP members for the way in which they had supported the meeting.

ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS
Report of the special meeting
New York
7 September 2005

DRAFT LIST OF ATTENDANCE
MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr Hafnaoui Amrani	Algeria
Mr Diogo De Jesus	Angola
Mr Ian Harris	Australia
Mr Aljosa Campara	Boznia & Herzegovina
Mr Samson Ename Ename	Cameroon
Ms Audrey O'Brien	Canada
Mr Gary O'Brien	Canada
Mr Carlos Hoffmann	Chile
Mr Josip Sesar	Croatia
Mr Peter Kynstetr	Czech Republic
Mr Henrik Tvarno	Denmark
Mr Ahmed Bourhan Daoud	Djibouti
Mr Heiki Sibul	Estonia
Mr Samual Alemayehu	Ethiopia
Mr Asnake Tadesse	Ethiopia
Mr Seppo Tiitinen	Finland
Mr Raymond Okinda	Gabon
Mr Kieran Coughlan	Ireland
Ms Deirdre Lane	Ireland
Mr Arie Hahn	Israel
Mr Ugo Zampetti	Italy
Mr Paolo Santomauro	Italy
Mr Arvydas Kregzde	Lithuania
Mr Mamadou Santara	Mali
Mr Abdel Jalil Zerhouni	Morocco
Ms Jacqueline Biesheuvel-Vermeijden	Netherlands
Mr Moussa Moutari	Niger
Mr Hans Brattesta	Norway
Mr Muhammad Rafiq	Pakistan
Mr Oscar Yabes	Phillipines
Mr Adam Witalec	Poland
Mrs Adelina Sa'Carvalho	Portugal
Mr Constantin Dan Vasiliu	Romania
Mr Lovro Loncar	Slovenia
Mr Manuel Alba Navarro	Spain
Mr Anders Forsberg	Sweden
Mr John Clerc	Switzerland
Mr Pithoon Pumhiran	Thailand
Mrs Suvimol Phumisingharas	Thailand
Mr Aleksander Novakoski	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Mr Hugo Rodríguez Filippini	Uruguay
Mr José Pedro Montero	Uruguay
Mr Bui Ngoc Thanh	Vietnam
Mr Austin Zvoma	Zimbabwe
Mr Colin Cameron	Assembly of the Western European Union

ALSO PRESENT

Mr Figueireyo S. Figueireio	Angola
Ms Judy Middlebrook	Australia
Mr Jigme Zangpo	Bhutan
Mr Nevenka Savic	Bosnia & Herzegovina
Mr Thablogo Chephethe	Botswana
Mr Mohamed Ben Oussen	Comoros
Mr Stjepan Vukas	Croatia
Mr Stavroula Vassilouni	Greece
Mr Helgi Bernodsson	Iceland
Mr Anders Johnsson	IPU
Ms M Cassarino	Italy
Mr Sumskiene	Lithuania
Ms K Kackuviene	Lithuania
Ms Isabelle Barre	Luxembourg
Ms Isabelle Peters	Monaco
Mr Sanoussi Jackou	Niger
N Madrid-Yabes	Phillipines
Ms Anna Szlelennik	Poland
Mr Won Jong Sang	Republic of Korea
Mr Jeong Ku Jin	Republic of Korea
Mr Michael Wetzee	South Africa
Ms Asa Erwall	Sweden
Mr Phichet Kitisin	Thailand
Ms Neeranan Sungto	Thailand
Mrs Samonrutas Aksornmat	Thailand
Mr Hasan Baytekin	Turkey
Mr Rhodri Walters	United Kingdom
Mr Douglas Millar	United Kingdom
Mr Mesaack Kitchosn	Zimbabwe
Mr Jeremy Meadows	United States of America

ASSOCIATION DES SECRETAIRES GENERAUX DES PARLEMENTS
ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS

Réunion de New York (septembre 2005) / *New York Meeting (September 2005)*

Siège de l'ONU SALLE DE CONFERENCE 1

UNITED NATIONS BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM 1

PROJET D'ORDRE DU JOUR DE LA
REUNION (sujet à
modifications)

DRAFT ORDERS OF THE DAY OF THE MEETING (subject to change)

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Mercredi 7 septembre / Wednesday 7th September

- 10H00 Ouverture de la réunion
10.00a *Opening of the meeting.*
- Ordre du jour
Orders of the day
- Communication [à confirmer] : «Informations sur la deuxième Conférence mondiale des présidents de parlement»
*Communication [to be confirmed]: «Information about the 2nd World Conference of Speakers**
- 10H30 Le processus de réforme de l'ONU, à la lumière du rapport "Dans une liberté plus grande..." du Secrétaire général de l'ONU, M. Annan
- 10.30am *The Process of Reform of the United Nations, in light of the report "In larger Freedom" by the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr Annan.*

Conduite du débat : M. Robert Orr, Sous-Secrétaire général de l'ONU à la coordination des politiques et à la planification stratégique

Moderator: Mr Robert Orr, United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Policy Co-ordination and Strategic Planning.

11H00 Débat général : «Comblent le déficit démocratique dans les relations internationales et la dimension parlementaire des Nations Unies»

11.00a *General Debate: "Bridging the democracy gap in international relations and the concept of a parliamentary dimension of the United Nations"¹*

Conduite du débat : M. Anders Forsberg, Secrétaire général du *Riksdagen* de

Suède *Moderator: Mr Anders Forsberg, Secretary-General of the Swedish*

Riksdagen

Clôture / Closure.