



LAUNCH OF THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARY REPORT

Cédric Jurgensen, Parliamentary Development Advisor, UNDP HQ

The *Global Parliamentary Report* (GPR) was presented to parliamentarians from more than 120 countries at the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) 126th Assembly in Kampala, **Uganda** on **April 2, 2012**. A joint publication between UNDP and IPU, the report investigates the state of relations between parliaments and citizens. It analyses in particular how parliaments need to adapt to changing expectations of the people regarding their representative function. It highlights successful experiences from various regions on effective reforms to better inform and consult citizens. As part of the launch, parliamentarians concentrated on ways to modernize parliament and build a new relationship between parliaments and citizens. Key speakers and participants included: Rebeca Grynspan, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Associate Administrator, Honorable Abdelwahed Radi, President of the IPU, Mr. Anders Johnsson, Secretary-General of the IPU, Honorable Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, and the lead author of the GPR, Mr. Greg Power.

The GPR global launch included a press conference and plenary presentation with all parliamentary delegations. Apart from the IPU Assembly official activities, the GPR global launch was followed by two meetings between UNDP Associate Administrator and delegations from Benin and DRC Parliaments. These delegations were respectively headed by Hon. Mathurin Nago, Speaker of Benin's National Assembly and Hon. Edouard Mokolo, first Vice-President of the DRC Senate. In both cases, exchanges were friendly and constructive, the heads of parliamentary delegations indicating their will to continue their excellent cooperation with UNDP to strengthen the role and capacities of Parliament.

We believe many recommendations included in the GPR can be useful for UNDP COs when providing advice and support to parliaments, in order to make them more representative and, through enhanced exchanges with citizens, improve the effectiveness of their lawmaking and oversight activities. The GPR is available in English, French and Spanish (soon in Arabic) on the UNDP and AGORA websites.

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Plenary presentation of the GPR

SOLOMON ISLANDS: MPS TO FURTHER INVESTIGATE RESERVED SEATS FOR WOMEN

Article provided by Charmaine Rodrigues, Pacific Regional Legislative Strengthening Expert, FJ

A mock parliamentary debate to celebrate International Women's Day in Solomon Islands has resulted in a decision to form a working group to look further into creating reserved seats for women. Ruth Maetala, who took part in the debate, says the new committee will work with the legislative taskforce already investigating how to apply temporary special measures in the Solomon Islands context by 2014.

She said as a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW, the Solomon Islands government can impose special measures to advance the status of women. Maetala said that's something for which the public is showing clear support. "It has been published by the people's survey that more than 80 percent of the people who were interviewed supported women to be parliamentarians and the reserved seats for women. Because it's easy to argue that CEDAW is foreign, it's a foreign policy and why have reserved seats for women." Maetala said the aim is for 10 reserved seats to be in place before the 2014 election.

SAMOA PARLIAMENT DEBATES WOMEN'S QUOTA BILL

Article provided by Charmaine Rodrigues, Pacific Regional Legislative Strengthening Expert, FJ

Member of Parliament for Fa'asaleleaga No 2, Papali'i Lio Masipa'u, has described the Government's push to have 10 per cent of seats in Parliament occupied by women as an "unstable change." The first term MP made the statement in Parliament on March 12, when the controversial bill was debated in the House.

Papali'i agrees that more women should be in Parliament. But he warns that the change is detrimental in the sense that in one Parliament sitting there are 49 members and in the next, 54. "The change is inconsistent," he said. "It doesn't provide the stability and that's why I say it is an unstable change." The MP is also worried that the Legislative Assembly would discriminate against women who will be branded as "additional members." "It'll be bearable for men if they are called additional MPs," he said, "but I feel for our women when they are labeled as additional Members of Parliament". Papali'i is also against the idea of drawing the winner for a constituency when the top two candidates' names are drawn out. He compared the method of drawing the winner to a raffle.

Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi objected. He pointed out that the leader of Tautua Samoa Party, Palusalua Fa'apo II, among others, are additional members since their constituencies originally had one MP. "But we don't call them additional members because of that," said Tuilaepa. Cabinet Minister, Le Mamea Ropati assisted the Prime Minister. He told Parliament that he recalled a former MP for Fa'asaleleaga who won his seat through a draw. The Minister did not provide a name. "So this is nothing new," said Le Mamea.

MP Fa'asaleleaga No.1, Gatoloaifa'ana Amataga Gidlow applauded the change. She said it was most wonderful that Parliament will soon recognize the valuable role played by women by allowing more of them to sit in Parliament. Gatoloa'ifaana suggested that the number of women in Parliament should be increased to make up 50 per cent of MPs. Another woman MP and Minister of Justice, Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, also supported the bill. She was, however, highly critical of views, which suggest that the bill is driven by the United Nations. "We are the United Nations," she said. "Let me remind that Samoa is part of the United Nations and therefore we are the UN."

Another veteran MP and former Speaker of the House, Toleafoa Le'aupepe Fa'afisi, said he initially objected to the bill when it was introduced. But he changed his mind after he reflected on how far Samoa has come as a country since Universal Suffrage was introduced. Besides, he said; "With men, after work they go straight to play golf and then to the bar. As for women, they have families to look after and they are more focused. So I fully support the Government's plan to have more of them in Parliament.

The Bill has now been referred to a parliamentary committee for hearings, and is likely to come back to Parliament in July/August 2012.

PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE NETWORK ESTABLISHED

Marcia Monge, UNDP Bangladesh

Under the call **One Voice One Goal** the Parliament of Bangladesh through its Standing Committee on Environment and Forests and with the support of UNDP organized a **Meeting of Parliamentarians on climate change: Beyond COP17** from **14-16 March 2012** in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**. Members of Parliament from over twenty countries from around the world attended the event, including the Hon'ble Speaker from East African Parliament, Hon'ble Deputy Speaker from the Maldives and Chairs and Members of Environment and Climate Change Standing Committees. The meeting was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Mr. Kevin Deveaux, UNDP Policy Advisor for Parliamentary Development and Dr. Saleemul Huq, Climate Change Expert facilitated the event.



The meeting resulted in the establishment of a network of Parliamentarians for Climate Justice aimed at supporting the most vulnerable countries to tackle the challenges of climate change through concrete advocacy, legislative and oversight actions of parliamentarians at national, regional and international levels. The involvement of Parliamentarians was considered critical in order to ensure the good governance of climate change while keeping in mind that this will require that parliaments are adequately equipped with knowledge and skills to work along with governments and other actors to advance green sustainable development models that take into account climate change. Parliaments' response to climate change, security and sustainable development is relatively recent and so developing dialogues, best practices and lessons learned was found necessary. In this sense, this meeting as well as the established network offer valuable opportunities to substantially contribute to this process. The network will be open to all MPs who endorse the **Dhaka Declaration**. The Founding Members who attended the conference committed to encourage their parliamentary colleagues to join the network which seeks to promote strategic alliances of Parliaments and Parliamentarians, as well as to serve as a platform for MPs to share knowledge, information and best practice and to engage with social and news media. A network Steering Committee composed by MPs from different regions of the world was established with a mandate to produce a network action plan by the end of April 2012.

EYE ON DJIBOUTI

Ramzi Fouad, UNDP Djibouti

• *Parliamentary Caravan*

In the framework of UNDP's parliamentary development project in Djibouti which aims at strengthening the capacity of Parliament to exercise its oversight functions, as well as promoting the accountability of MPs to their constituents, especially those living in remote areas of the country – UNDP Djibouti provided support to a "Parliamentary Caravan" primarily composed of local elected officials, which held meetings in the capital and the 5 regions of the country. It is the first time in the history of the Republic of Djibouti that such an initiative was undertaken. Local communities expressed their interest to meet their elected officials and welcomed the opportunity to interact with them as well as learn more about the activities of the Parliament. One of the most remarkable achievements is the establishment of a permanent parliamentary unit in each of the 5 regions. The Parliamentary Caravan initiative contributed to strengthening the visibility and credibility of the Parliament vis-à-vis the people of Djibouti by reaching out to the constituents and accounting directly to them for their work in Parliament.



After Dikhil, the Parliamentary Caravan visited the district of Tadjourah

- **Successful partnership between the Parliament and the UN system**

A UN delegation led by the Norwegian Ambassador H.E. Mr. Jostein Leiro and composed of Executive Boards members of various UN agencies (including UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, WFP, UNICEF and UN-WOMEN), met with a group of parliamentarians in Djibouti to take stock of progress towards achieving the MDGs, identify challenges that lie ahead and discuss the way forward. The discussions between national MPs and members of the Executive Boards of UN agencies also aimed at assessing the UN's support and contribution to the implementation of projects and programs across the country and how to better coordinate and complement the multiple activities on the ground.

The President of the National Assembly, Mr. Idriss Ali Arnaoud, the Secretary General of Parliament, Mr. Ismail Goulal Boudin, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Djibouti, the UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Hodan A. Haji-Mohamud, and UNDP Governance Program Officer, Mr. Harbi Omar Chirdon were also present at the meeting.



UN/Parliament meeting in Djibouti

The Members of Parliament and UN representatives agreed on the importance to work with the Djibouti people, government and civil society to eradicate poverty and promote good governance, human rights, gender equality, decentralization (through the empowerment of regional councils), and institutional strengthening in the Republic of Djibouti. The President of the National Assembly, Mr. Idriss Ali Arnaoud, highlighted "the exemplary collaboration" between the Parliament and UNDP as well as other UN agencies while overlooking many years of support and fruitful cooperation.

STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENT'S CORE FUNCTIONS: THE CASE OF SURINAME

Meriam Hubard, UNDP Suriname

In 2011 UNDP Suriname signed its first [multi-year programme](#) with the National Assembly of Suriname. The partnership is aimed at strengthening the Parliament in carrying out its core functions and responsibilities and is based on a comprehensive approach to parliamentary development. The project focuses on 8 areas: legislative function, oversight function, representative function of parliament, Secretariat and staff services, parliamentary strengthening instruments, international relations, gender equality and ICT strengthening of Parliament.

While the four year programme was signed between UNDP and the Parliament, the other resident UN agencies are also contributing and sharing knowledge for successful achievement of the goals set under the programme. At the request of the Parliament, UNDP assisted with the organization of a series of briefing/learning sessions on a wide range of topics, critical in the development of Suriname. Topics such as Climate Change, Housing, Doing Business and the Impact of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Suriname were organized to build the substantive capacity of the Members of Parliament and inform their deliberative functions. For the session on NCDs, UNDP partnered with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

The Parliament, UNDP and AGORA are currently working to finalize the set up of a course on Legislative Drafting which is to be conducted for the Parliament. The course aims at enhancing the understanding and knowledge of the participants regarding the mechanics of legislative drafting, to enable them to draft legislation and critically review legislation which is prepared for the Parliament. The course is scheduled to start in May and end in August 2012.

For more information on UNDP's parliamentary strengthening programme in Suriname, please visit: http://www.undpsuriname.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=126:new-undp-programme-to-strengthen-surinames-national-assembly&catid=1:news&Itemid=12

EFFECTIVE AND TRANSPARENT BUDGETARY SYSTEM IN GEORGIA: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT

Gigi Bregadze, UNDP Georgia

Since 2004 significant reforms have been underway in Georgia to improve and harmonize its public finance management (PFM) system with international standards. The new Budget Code adopted in 2009 provided for the introduction of an effective and transparent budgetary system through gradual move from traditional (line-item) to program-based budgeting (PBB). Given the complex nature of the new system, the initiative represented a challenge both for the Government and Parliament, with latter being responsible for the scrutiny, adoption and an oversight of implementation of the state budget.

To ensure a highly competent and qualified approach of the Parliament to the PBB and build its knowledge and skills in this area, the UNDP Georgia Project “A Strong Parliament in a Consolidated Democracy” (which aims among other things to strengthen parliament’s budgetary oversight functions and effective participation in the annual budget cycle) launched a variety of capacity building activities both for the Members and Staff of the Parliament starting from 2010: study visits to European countries, trainings and seminars by prominent local and international experts, workshops between legislative and executive bodies to share experience and foster common approach during the reform process.



Study visit to The Hague

Through UNDP’s advocacy and active cooperation with other international actors engaged in PFM reforms in Georgia, the Parliament was invited to join a working group under the Ministry of Finance tasked with the elaboration of PBB methodology. The group consultations resulted in a successful adoption of the methodology with around 80% of recommendations by the Parliament taken into consideration. In fall 2011, the Parliament scrutinized and adopted the first ever program budget of Georgia for 2012.



PBB Workshop in Slovenia

Based on the European experience, Georgia has years ahead to enhance and sophisticate its system to approximate it to international standards. UNDP continues its active support to the Parliament of Georgia in this endeavor.

PARLIAMENT’S ROLE IN CRIME PREVENTION, NATIONAL SECURITY AND GENDER EQUALITY – DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Anyarlene Berges, UNDP Dominican Republic

Through the Institutional Strengthening Project targeting the Chamber of Deputies, UNDP has focused its efforts on capacity building and developing management and coordination mechanisms to enhance public safety, crime prevention and equity. The Chamber of Deputies and the Standing Committee on Interior in particular have been very active in this field, producing - with the technical support of UNDP, a draft law on the regulation and control of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials; a draft law to create an emergency 911 system; and a draft law to modernize the National Police. From January to March 2012, workshops and discussions have taken place among deputies and regional experts both in Mendoza, Argentina and Bogota, Colombia – in order to exchange local, regional and international best practices with regards to the draft laws mentioned above. The Chamber of Deputies continues to mobilize debates and engagement on these issues and is taking forward the process of legal and institutional reforms to promote national security. Furthermore, in celebration of the International Day of Women, UNDP together with the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (OAS), International IDEA, and the Ministry of Women, organized a Meeting on March 7 and 8, 2012, with members of the Gender Equality parliamentary Committee and presidential candidates for the 2012 elections. The topic of the meeting was “Real Equality between Women and Men in the Electoral Programs”. This was an unprecedented event in the country, allowing presidential candidates to expose their programs from a gender perspective.

The Chairman of the Committee on Interior, Elpidio Baez, welcoming the legislators who participated in the discussion group: "Challenges related to the institutional modernization of the National Police: Draft Law on the National Police"



Members of the parliamentary mission including Deputy Chairman of the Sub-committee working on the 911 Bill – Ricardo Contreras - with UNDP Consultant, Ivan Ramirez, in front of the Strategic Operations Center in Mendoza, Argentina



SUPPORT TO THE PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

Doina Ghimici, Chief Technical Specialist, UNDP/PAPP

UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) has recently initiated strategic engagement in parliamentary development guided by its new vision [Development for Freedom](#). On 16 February 2012, the first meeting of the Project Board for the new PAPP's **Project on Support to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Secretariat** took place at the PLC premises in Ramallah. The Project Board discussed and approved the inception report for this project, the general work plan for 2012 and a more detailed work plan for the first two quarters. Implemented in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and in close partnership with the beneficiary, which also hosts the project team at its premises, the project is funded by the European Union and aims to strengthen the capacity of the PLC Secretariat to support the PLC in functioning as a typical legislature upon resumption of parliamentary business, which is currently suspended due to the Israeli occupation and the political rift between the main Palestinian political forces, Fatah and Hamas. It is expected that recent reconciliation talks will lead to new parliamentary elections and a functioning legislature. As part of the PAPP project, from 25-29 March 2012 the first in a series of expert missions supported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and several national parliaments interested in providing assistance to the Palestinian legislature, among which the Portuguese Parliament, took place. The purpose of the expert mission is to carry out a review of ICT resources, capacities and potential, and of information management and communication procedures and practice in the PLC Secretariat. ICT development has been identified as a priority area of assistance to the PLC. The project will help the PLC Secretariat to define a clear vision and strategic objectives in the field of ICT, as well as gaps and challenges, and to start addressing them through targeted interventions.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"Women in parliament: Gender equality is everyone's business"

Monjurul KABIR, UNDP Policy Adviser & Regional Project Manager, Bratislava Regional Centre

"Parliaments are the most important representative institutions in governments and yet they remain misunderstood, unpopular, unsupported and in many cases, underused. In Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the status of gender equality is an example where parliaments can play a stronger role in fulfilling some of their key functions related to lawmaking, oversight and representation.

If the executive branch dominates the government apparatus without maintaining the delicate balance of executive-legislative relations, parliaments seem to have unfocused or unrelated debates, a low level of legislative activity, and little influence and effectiveness in representing citizens. According to a [recent assessment](#) (prepared by International IDEA for the European Commission's support to Parliamentary Development), it is difficult for parliaments to be effective when their members are subordinate to the will of the senior leadership of the executive and may suffer career-ending reversals if they act independently. This is why parliaments in the region need technical improvement on several fronts including:

- Use of committee system in oversight work;
- Legislative drafting;
- Resource management;
- Communication and priority setting in legislative affairs;
- Constituency outreach;
- Research and advocacy related to constitutional obligations

The committee system has become the main vehicle for legislative scrutiny and oversight over the last few decades, and the plenary session (full parliamentary assembly) provides the opportunity for generalized debate and a forum for major announcements. This is why it is so important that women lawmakers take prominent and active roles in committee work. But while the creation of gender committees in at least fifteen countries of the region certainly helps promote gender equality, it doesn't always resolve the bigger challenge of parliaments fulfilling their key functions.

So far, in support to parliaments, international donors have concentrated their efforts in technical capacity-building, but this approach de-emphasizes the underlying issue of how power is exercised. Where there is little demand for democracy or where the boundaries of acceptable conduct in governance do not exist or are unenforceable, capacity development approaches are unlikely to result in more efficient institutions. Therefore, a deeper analysis is needed so we can have more realistic expectations of what can be achieved and by when, but most importantly to improve donor strategies.

The [Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#) urged governments to improve support to parliamentary oversight, including by supporting capacity development – backed by adequate resources and clear action plans. Clearly, international actors need to get their act together, and a fragmented approach will not work. Such an analysis before carrying out capacity development support or technical assistance should include the challenges that women face within the political process and in the parliamentary arena. Perhaps it would reveal that targeted support to gender committees promotes gender equality.

There are, however, a growing number of parliaments operating in one-party dominant political landscapes that are starting to see democratic improvements. New opposition parties and groups, increasing political space for debate and legislative activities, use of social media, a growing influence on the government and interest and effectiveness in representing citizens are all examples of gradual democratization in the region. Only in such an environment can gender committees have greater influence on gender equality. A recent [e-discussion](#) on the [i-knowpolitics](#) network revealed some encouraging examples of quota systems and gender committees in the region.

I recently returned from Kyrgyzstan where I had the privilege of interacting with a dynamic group of MPs who are interested in promoting human rights, gender equality, judicial reforms and the rights of people with disabilities. They forged an alliance to promote judicial reforms and widen access to justice – critical for advancing gender equality in Kyrgyzstan.

We need more women in parliament, and we need more men MPs to share the responsibility of promoting gender equality legislation. It is in everyone's interest.”

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Global Parliamentary Report

The Report is a joint work of the IPU and UNDP, and draws on input from 73 parliaments. It analyzes changes in relations between parliaments and citizens, and suggests improvements to parliamentary strategies for meeting public expectations. The report is available online in English, French and Spanish on the [UNDP](#) website and [AGORA](#), the Web portal for parliamentary development.

Report on cooperation between Parliament and Independent and Regulatory Agencies in Moldova

The UNDP parliamentary program in Moldova has published an extensive research report on the parliament's interaction with ten independent and regulatory agencies in Moldova. The publication addresses how the independence and the accountability of the agencies can be strengthened, and what initiatives parliament can undertake to optimize its interaction with the agencies. The report outlines a set of 8 criteria for independence and accountability of the agencies, along with 34 indicators for evaluation. The research report makes a comparative multi-country analysis for the energy and the telecommunications regulators and their interaction with the parliament. The recommendations derive from extensive field research in Moldova and the policy documents of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris. On the basis of the research report, UNDP Moldova prepared Standing Operating Procedures for parliament's interaction with the independent and regulatory agencies. The report is accessible on [AGORA](#).

USEFUL LINKS

- ✓ [Agora](#)
- ✓ [IknowPolitics](#)
- ✓ [Teamworks](#)
- ✓ [Arab parliaments](#)
- ✓ [IPU](#)
- ✓ [NDI](#)
- ✓ [WBI](#)