



### Editorial



#### *'Parliaments and UNDP: Reflections on the challenges ahead'*

**Geraldine J. Fraser-Moleketi**  
*Director of the Democratic Governance  
Group, Bureau for Development Policy,  
UNDP*

**Welcome to the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of UNDP's Parliamentary Development Newsletter!**

As we approach the MDG deadline, we must draw lessons from parliaments' engagement in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but also look beyond 2015 and consider the role of governance and parliaments in continuing to promote development objectives. The African Regional Dialogue on "the New Development Agenda: Post-2015 Global Thematic Consultation on Governance" (October 2012, South Africa), which I had the honor of convening, - provided a unique opportunity to tackle these issues and highlight that democratic governance does not end with institutions. The fundamental question is whether these institutions are responsive to the needs and demands of the people and have a positive impact on the realities of people's lives. The need for country ownership, government accountability and national policy was not sufficiently taken into account during the MDGs design and implementation. Now, it is highlighted as a requirement to ensure that the new set of objectives is attained. Parliaments are at the forefront of these imperatives, because they play a critical role in meeting those requirements through their lawmaking, budgeting, and oversight functions. While specific post-2015 goals have yet to be determined, underlying trends and priorities, shaping the development agenda, have been identified, as have guiding principles relating to equity and equality, environmental sustainability, inclusive social and economic development, peace and security and the fulfillment of human rights. Parliaments can make a direct difference by implementing nationally relevant development plans and budgets that are compliant with associated priorities defining the post-2015 development framework. They can translate international commitments into national legislation, hold governments accountable for meeting these commitments and pass laws that specifically respond to

these critical challenges, for example by passing laws that are sensitive to climate change, foster employment, or address patterns of inequalities that relate to demographic change, urbanization, infrastructure, and migration.

Long viewed as an essential component of any representative democracy, parliaments are facing an unprecedented crisis of trust at a time when public expectations are growing. Recent years have seen a surge in radical popular protest, from 'Occupy Wall Street' to Indian Naxalites, from North African youth to Chilean teachers, and from Muslims in Xinjiang (China) to Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific. These protests have culminated with the uprisings in the Arab States during 2011, which provide the most potent articulation of the growing discontent with the performance of political institutions. But as the new [Global Parliamentary Report](#), jointly produced by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UNDP shows, **parliaments remain inextricably linked to the idea of a State's legitimacy**. Evidence further points that the presence of a powerful legislature is an unmixed blessing for democratization. The so-called 'Arab uprising' underscored the importance of Parliament in people's quest for greater political voice and democracy and reaffirmed the notion that effective and inclusive parliaments are key to strong and stable democracies. Parliaments need to live up to the expectations and demands for greater transparency and accountability. The words of Nelson Mandela's 100 day speech to Parliament almost 20 years ago (Cape Town, 18 August 1994) still resonate today: *"The people want real change for the better, and they are prepared to work for it. They expect of representatives in Parliament, leadership that meets the requirements of the times we live in. They have elected us because they trust that we will meet their aspirations. Let us harness the nation's energies to more rapidly develop and reconstruct our country"*.

UNDP is uniquely placed to work with countries around the world. It can help them on that path, providing support to one-in-three parliaments globally by building the capacity of legislators and technical staff, providing technical assistance for institutional reform, promoting inclusive and participative political institutions (through the empowerment of youth and women in particular), and strengthening Parliaments' relationships with the executive and judiciary branches of government and with civil society. In 2012, UNDP expanded its parliamentary development approach in order to respond to demands from elected representatives, parliamentary institutions, national transition councils, constitutional assemblies and political parties.

As we launch the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Parliamentary Development Newsletter, I would like to take this opportunity, in my position as DGG Director and also as a former Member of Parliament, to make a tribute to parliaments, particularly acknowledging their role in advancing sustainable human development and improving people's lives. – Such is also the vision and such are the goals of our Organization. Within Parliament's walls, the voices of the people should resonate, rights should be proclaimed, and fair and just laws which regulate societies, should be enshrined. Parliament represents humanity at its best: Humanity's ability to gather peacefully, discuss differences and confront issues of common concern for the greater good of all. Furthermore, I wish to pay homage to every UNDP professional around the world who strives to build stronger parliaments for stronger democracies. Finally, I commend the initiative leading to the Parliamentary Development Newsletter, as it serves to consolidate our community of practice, enhancing our ability to interact, share and capture innovative knowledge and lessons learned.

## IN THIS ISSUE

### AFRICA

National parliamentary tour in Togo to promote peace and reconciliation	Page 3
Overview of key results of UNDP's support to the Ethiopian Parliament	Page 3
2012 Secretaries' Association of the Legislatures of South Africa (SALSA) Development Seminar	Page 4

### ARAB STATES

Libya: Exclusive video on UNDP's role in supporting women candidates during the elections of the General National Congress in July 2012	Page 4
Tunisia: Video on women candidates during the 2011 National Constituent Assembly elections	Page 4
Technical support to the Lebanese Parliament	Page 4

### ASIA-PACIFIC

Strengthening women's representation in Parliament in India	Page 6
Maldives: Induction modules aimed at building the capacity of the People's Majlis Secretariat	Page 7
Joint UNDP/IPU collaboration to support the Legislature of Myanmar to strengthen its role in contributing to democracy, reconciliation and peace consolidation	Page 7

### EUROPE AND THE CIS

Improving the transparency and outreach of the Parliament of Moldova regarding the European Integration Process	Page 8
Strengthening the oversight and scrutiny functions of the National Assembly of Serbia in the area of State budget expenditures	Page 8

### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Support to the Salvadoran Women's Parliamentary Group	Page 10
UNDP and the Parliament conclude course on legislative drafting in Suriname	Page 11

### GLOBAL

UNDP/FNA study tour for women MPs	Page 11
Launch of the Global Parliamentary Report in the USA: two dedicated events in NY and Washington DC	Page 13

#### Notice addressed to Project Officers

Please provide contact information of CTAs or Project Managers based within the Parliament to [marilyn.cham@undp.org](mailto:marilyn.cham@undp.org) so we may include them in our mailing list for future correspondence.

#### USEFUL LINKS

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

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## National parliamentary tour in Togo to promote peace and reconciliation

Ornella Moderan

Governance and crisis prevention Analyst, Parliamentary development and national peace-building programs, Democratic Governance Unit, UNDP Togo



UNDP worked with the parliament on a national tour of parliamentarians with a focus on mediation to promote peace and reconciliation. The purpose of the national tour was to promote parliamentary outreach (beyond parliamentarians' respective constituencies) and interaction with local communities, strengthen their ties with civil society, promote social cohesion and national reconciliation, and spread a culture of peace, tolerance and nonviolence among the people, particularly in the context of the upcoming elections. Parliamentarians from all political groups (including opposition parties) and committees took part in this initiative. In total, more than 4,500 people participated in the meetings that were held across the country including youth, women, academicians, CSOs, local authorities and the media.



The national tour was a chance for parliamentarians to enhance dialogue and inform the people on peaceful means of resolving contentious issues through dialogue, mediation, and law enforcement. It was also an opportunity to raise the awareness of MPs on the main issues of concern for citizens pertaining to methods of election or appointment of traditional leaders, the peaceful settlement of land disputes, the criminalization of domestic and gender-based violence, as well as many other topics perceived as potential sources of conflict. Parliamentarians who took part in this initiative were encouraged to adopt a crisis-sensitive lens when passing legislation to better respond to the needs and concerns of the people. Given the success of the initiative, a proposition was made to incorporate parliamentary outreach and public visits as a regular activity for MPs.

More information on UNDP's parliamentary project in Togo available on Teamworks [here](#).

## Overview of key results of UNDP's support to the Ethiopian Parliament

David Omozuafon

Democratic Governance Programme, Management Specialist, UNDP Ethiopia

UNDP has been supporting both the House of Federation (Upper House) and the House of People's Representatives (Lower House) in Ethiopia within the framework of the Democratic Institutions Programme. As the programme comes to a close at the end of this year, the Country Office has reflected on some of the key outcomes and achievements (more information is available [here](#)).

The **House of Federation** (HoF) was empowered to discharge its mandate more effectively. It contributed to increasing the awareness of citizens on their constitutional rights through weekly radio programmes. The children cartoon television series developed continued to gain wider publicity and acceptance through weekly broadcasts by the Ethiopian Television. The HoF reviewed the Grant Sharing Formula through consultations and workshops with stakeholders drawn from the regions and federal ministries, establishing a more equitable federal grants allocation system in the country. The HoF also designed a Web-based Intranet to encourage public outreach and 'in-reach' by promoting faster and efficient accessibility to information and responses to claims; three main applications are available:

- Claim Application: people are invited to send their claims and receive responses via the web;

- Conflict Reporting Application system: conflicts are reported and then analyzed and dealt with at the House level.

- Research Application: research institutions are contacted and assigned to carry out researches on certain topics via this application;

Furthermore, the HoF actively engaged in the resolution of issues regarding nationalities and nations, the mediation of conflicts, and the maintenance of unity and economic balance. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) dated April 16th, 2010 building a partnership in order to work jointly towards conflict prevention, management and resolution and other issues of peace-building as part of their common mission.

The capacities of the **House of Peoples Representatives** (HoPR) have also been enhanced particularly in the area of oversight, public consultation and popular representation. The skills and understanding of MPs have been improved regarding their roles and responsibilities of exercising their parliamentary oversight function. Clear understanding of the separation of powers between parliament and government has been achieved. MPs are now using standardized checklists and formats to monitor the government's actions. The fieldwork activities of standing committees have become more significant both at the federal and regional levels. They allowed MPs' to have better access to information from primary sources of information and provided an opportunity for MPs to better interact with citizens. The oversight work of the parliament is getting a wide media coverage enabling civil society to also monitor the performance of government with regard to the implementation of policies, programmes and projects. All in all, strengthened parliamentary oversight has contributed to improving state service delivery.



Due to the continuous and frequent oversight of the parliamentary committees, the pace of project implementation like the construction of road, education and health facilities and water projects have been improved in many places across the country.

Finally, the Speakers Forum, established in 2005 with the purpose of sharing experience about parliamentary reform, law-making process, oversight and representation, - has been promoted and strengthened in order to further expand and share knowledge and skills among the leadership and professional staff of the parliament both at federal, regional, city and 'Woreda' council levels. All the activities undertaken by the Forum were carried out with the full support of UNDP through DIP. The Speakers' Forum has been upgraded and well promoted in a sense that a new Memorandum of Understanding has been endorsed to transform the Speakers' Forum into a joint council's consultation forum comprising of the Speakers, Deputy Speakers, Chairpersons of Standing Committees, and Heads of Secretariat of both the HoPR and HoF, as well as local councils. In addition, the membership was expanded in a spirit of inclusion - it was agreed that government whips and members of the advisory committees of the HoPR and HoF would join the forum. The women's and standing committees' forums also became part of the joint council's consultation forum.

## 2012 Secretaries' Association of the Legislatures of South Africa (SALSA) Development Seminar

**Renée Scott**

*Senior Manager, Legislative Sector Support, Parliament of the RSA*

Delegates gave a big thumbs-up to the 2012 Development Seminar of the Secretaries' Association of the Legislatures of South Africa (SALSA), recently held in East London, South Africa, from 02-05 October 2012. More than 280 delegates, ranging from leadership and officials of the Parliament and Provincial Legislatures of South Africa attended the prestigious seminar. Coming under scrutiny was the concept of a democratic developmental state and the critical role that must be played by Parliament and Provincial Legislatures. Delegates were treated to some rare insights from a team of highly-regarded presenters in topics ranging from "The Democratic Development State – Implications for Parliaments and Legislatures" to "Parliamentary Institutes as centres of excellence for capacity development, research, training and knowledge management".

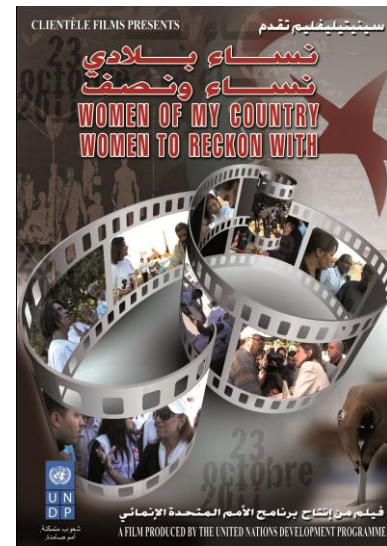
Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Democratic Governance Group Director, shared the United Nations Development Programme approach on addressing challenges and building partnerships with Legislatures to enhance democracy within the developmental state context. At its conclusion, the seminar adopted a number of resolutions. The most prominent included the need to expedite the establishment of a Parliamentary Institute to support capacity building initiatives for Members of Parliament and Legislatures and staff; to formalize collaboration between the South African Legislative Sector and continental and international parliamentary bodies, research institutions and civil society. Delegates also resolved to investigate opportunities that

will enhance engagement with local government and civil society.

## LIBYA: Exclusive video on UNDP's role in supporting women candidates for the elections of the General National Congress in July 2012



## TUNISIA: Video on women candidates during the 2011 National Constituent Assembly elections in Tunisia



## Technical Support to the Lebanese Parliament

**Gaëlle Kibranian**

*Programme Officer, Democratic Governance, UNDP Lebanon*

### **The Lebanese Parliamentary Internship Programme (LPIP)**

In the framework of the Lebanese Parliamentary Internship Programme (LPIP) and during the 3rd quarter of 2012, new interns from different backgrounds worked closely with MP Offices and Parliamentary Committees alongside 10 previously enrolled interns. Five interns graduated from the programme and received certificates of completion. In addition to providing assistance to MPs in drafting comparative analysis, conducting research, drafting legislation, taking minutes of meetings and

gathering information, interns conducted research papers on topics such as the relationship between the Media and Parliament, the relationship between national and international legislations in the prosecution of war criminals and perpetrators of crimes against humanity before the State Criminal Court, in addition to ways of improving the status of the elderly in Lebanon.

Additionally, an LPIP progress assessment meeting was held on August 30, 2012 for all enrolled interns to be introduced to each other and share internship experiences. LPIP representatives from both UNDP and the Parliament attended the meeting.



The Programme is constantly being promoted and the needs of MP Offices, Parliamentary Committees, General Directorates, and Parliamentary Administration for interns being regularly assessed. The LPIP's online application database includes 116 applicants to date from different academic backgrounds (Business Administration, Political Science, Law, Public Health, Biology, Arts etc.).

The LPIP link on the Parliament website is accessible [here](#) (in English and Arabic).



***The report on all new and amended draft laws submitted by Parliament regarding discrimination against women***

Upon the request of the Head of the Woman and Child Parliamentary Committee, a report was drafted for the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in preparation for

Lebanon's report to the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The report listed all new/amended draft laws submitted by Parliament regarding women rights based on the recommendations of the last CEDAW Committee report of February 2008. The report showed that 24 draft laws were submitted, among which only 3 entered into force.

***Workshop on the Draft Law Proposal for People living with HIV (PLHIV)***

Upon the request of the Public Health, Labor and Social Affairs Parliamentary Committee and in collaboration with the UNDP National Aids Program, the project organized a second workshop at Parliament on August 9, 2012 as a follow up to the first workshop held on June 26, 2012. As a result, participants and key stakeholders (NGOs and UN agencies) were provided a second opportunity to share their feedback on the PLHIV draft law with the consultant assigned to prepare it.



A follow-up meeting was held on August 30, 2012 with the head of the Public Health, Labor and Social Affairs Parliamentary Committee, a representative of the Ministry of Health, UNDP and other experts. It was decided that the draft law would be discussed within the Health Parliamentary Committee in the presence of key civil society members to receive their feedback and push for the adoption of the draft law.





### ***Training of parliamentary staff on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Parliamentary Libraries and on Parliamentary Information Technology (IT)***

A parliamentary staff member attended a training workshop on “Strategic Management of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Parliamentary Libraries” in Helsinki, Finland from August 8 to 10, 2012 and two other parliamentary staff members had the opportunity to attend an international conference on Parliamentary Information Technology (IT) in the Italian Parliament from September 13 to 15, 2012. The trainings were much needed to address capacity gaps in the field of ICT.

### ***Conference on “Democratic Transitions in the Arab World and their Impact on Lebanon” on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy***

On the occasion of the International Day of Democracy celebrated on September 15 each year, the project organized a conference on “Democratic transitions in the Arab world and their Impact on Lebanon” on September 19, 2012.



The objective of the conference was to raise and strengthen public awareness on the importance of democracy, development, and the promotion of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Head of the Youth and Sports Parliamentary Committee, the Country Director of UNDP, representatives of Parliament, youth and women organizations, international organizations, youth representatives of political parties at Parliament, media representatives and relevant experts attended the conference. In addition, an opinion survey on the expectations of citizens as to the roles of the Lebanese Parliament was distributed to all attendees targeting specifically youth and women organizations, the media and youth representatives of political parties at Parliament. The results of the survey will be accessible in November 2012.



### **Strengthening women’s representation in Parliament in India**

Article available on UNDP India’s website [here](#)

UNDP has called for the formation of a caucus of women political leaders across party lines to enhance women’s participation within political parties and to advocate for the Women’s Reservation Bill as a collective voice. For affirmative action to happen – be it quotas in Parliament or in political parties – mobilization of women around an integrated development agenda is critical. This was one of the key recommendations that emerged from the Roundtable on Women’s Participation in Politics organized by UNDP. In discussion with Parliamentarians, social activists and grassroots leaders UN Under-Secretary General and UNDP Associate Administrator, Rebeca Grynspan said, “There is much to be celebrated in India. There are over one million elected women representatives in local self-governments thanks to mandatory quotas ranging from 33 to 50 percent. Yet there are only around 11 percent women in Parliament lower than the global average of 20 percent, still far from the 30 percent target set at Beijing.” Ms. Grynspan went on to add, “More diverse participation in politics is not only good for women but is key for society and a strong democracy”. Ranjana Kumari, President of Women Power Connect and Director of Centre For Social Research making a strong case for urgent action on the long pending Women’s Reservation Bill said, “Women must not only demand but take their legitimate space in the political arena as a matter of right – they are no longer waiting for hand-outs as they are capable of entering the political field and doing as well as men. I am hopeful that the Bill will indeed be passed by the current government”.

India ranks 129 out of 147 countries on UNDP’s Gender Equality Index, lower than all South Asian countries except Afghanistan at 141. One of the key factors pulling down India’s rank on this index is the low level women’s representation in Parliament at just under 11 percent. (Caitlin Wiesen, UNDP Country Director summed up the outcome of the Roundtable by saying, “The key ingredients of success for women’s participation in politics are money, mentoring, mobilization and men”. Women who had contested in local self-government elections pointed out that having a large base of elected women at the Panchayat (local self-government) level is not enough to ensure that more women will contest or win elections at the state or higher levels. Shalini Tomar who contested state Assembly elections from Uttar Pradesh said, “Education, self-confidence and leadership skills are very important to bridge this gap. For this capacity development, networking with other women in politics and mentoring are very important”.

## Maldives: induction modules aimed at building the capacity of the People's Majlis Secretariat

**Zindu Salih**

*Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Maldives*

The Republic of Maldives has been undergoing a democratic reform process, which has included the amendment of the constitution and the passing of legislation to modernize the country. The People's Special Majlis, the Constitutional Assembly concluded its work in August 2008 and the revised national Constitution was adopted in August 2008. The new Constitution provided for the first time separation of powers which has allowed the country to witness its first multi-party presidential elections in 2008, a fully elected Parliament in 2009 and the first ever local council election in 2011. However, the transition to democracy has been difficult with the country facing significant challenges in consolidating initial progress. The Parliamentary election held in 2009 saw the representation of five political parties in the People's Majlis. For the efficient delivery of services to the people of Maldives as per its mandate in the Constitutions, the professional development of the Secretariat is crucial. The Secretariat needs to function, ever responding to the dynamic needs of the Majlis and projecting its image as a people-focused and accountable institution.

Assessments of the capacity needs of the Parliament and its Secretariat have stressed the need to build the technical and resource capacity of the Majlis Secretariat in order to enable its members to improve their support services to MPs. This includes strengthening in-house research capabilities, providing orientations training to secretariat staff, and revision of rules of procedure.

The Integrated Governance Programme (IGP) of UNDP aims to strengthen the capacities of national and local institutions to ensure transparency, accountability and democratic processes. In this regard the IGP is strengthening the capacities of the parliament secretariat to accelerate key functions of the Majlis. The main task under this initiative includes strengthening the management, procedural and legislative support roles of the parliament secretariat. It takes place within the framework of a 3-year parliamentary programme which began in September this year.

## Joint UNDP/IPU collaboration to support the Legislature of Myanmar to strengthen its role in contributing to democracy, reconciliation and peace consolidation

**Charmaine Rodrigues**, *Governance for Peace Specialist, BCPR – UNDP*; **Edin Elgsaether**, *Programme Analyst, UNDP Myanmar*

The last few years have seen a democratic breakthrough in Myanmar. A new Constitution was adopted by referendum in May 2008 and came fully into force on 31 March 2011, with the convening of the first session of the new parliament elected in November 2010 general elections. As per the 2008 Constitution, there are two levels of elected parliaments (Hluttaws) – at the Union (national) level and at the level of Regions and States. The Union Assembly (known as the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) consists of two chambers – the Pyithu Hluttaw (People's Assembly) with 440 seats and the Amyotha Hluttaw (Nationalities Assembly) with 224 seats. At the time of writing, there are 30 women MPs elected in both Assemblies.



UNDP meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairperson of the National League for Democracy party and Member of the Lower House of the Burmese Parliament



At the regional/state level, the Constitution provides for a unicameral parliament for each of the seven States and seven Regions within Myanmar, for a total of 14 parliaments. All of Myanmar's legislatures reserve 25% of their seats for military representatives.

In April 2012, a key set of by-elections were held, which resulted in overwhelming success for the reformist NLD party, and the election of its leader into the Union Assembly, Noble laureate Daw Aung Sun Suu Kyi. This new Myanmar Parliament now has a central role to play in the ongoing process of democratic reform and peace-building in Myanmar. Understandably however, many Members in the new Union and sub-national parliaments have limited experience with parliamentary work.

In recognition of the centrality of the importance of the Union and sub-national parliaments in supporting Myanmar's ongoing democratic transition and consolidation of peace, in April 2012, UNDP supported an initial scoping of support to the Union Assembly. A follow up mission was undertaken jointly by UNDP's Bureaus for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and Development Policy (BDP) in July 2012, in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This mission met with elected representatives in the Union Assembly, as well as the sub-national legislatures in Shan and Yangon States. The mission also met with a very broad range of political party representatives. Considerable effort was made to meet with women MPs at both Union and sub-national level.

Following the mission, UNDP worked with the IPU to develop options for immediate support to the Union Assembly, in recognition of the unanimous request by MPs for support to strengthen their library and research services. This support is currently being mobilized by UNDP jointly with IPU. UNDP is also developing a longer-term programme of support for both the Union Assembly and the sub-national legislatures and the country office is currently consulting with different stakeholders, including the parliament, on this process. In relation to the sub-national legislatures in particular, there is a strong recognition by UNDP that they have key peace-building and public outreach roles, in addition to their constitutional law-making and oversight duties.

## Improving transparency and outreach of the Parliament of Moldova regarding the European Integration Process

**Johan Hommes**

*Chief Technical Adviser, Parliamentary Development  
UNDP Moldova*

Since 2010 UNDP Moldova is implementing a project for the Parliament of Moldova aiming to improve the functioning of the institution, making it more transparent and open to the public. The project provides assistance to the parliamentary committees and to the staff. In this context the project has supported the Committee on European Integration with Policy Forums, which took place in different places in Moldova and in which MPs from different political parties were participating.

During the Forums members of the committee discussed with

representatives of local government, civil society and with citizens about the benefits and challenges of European Integration for the local community. Many questions were asked about cross-border cooperation, suggestions for and funding of local development projects, cooperation between local and national government, cross border issues (cooperation with neighbouring countries Romania and Ukraine) and how to make use of best European practices.



From left to right:

Mr. Igor Corman, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and European Integration

Mr. Vasile Bitca, Chair of the Municipal Council of Nisporeni

Ms. Ana Guçu, Member of the Committee

Mr. Dumitru Diacov, Member of the Committee

The discussion was based on an assessment of the local situation, which identified relevant topics regarding the European Integration Process. The Policy Forums provided a platform for outreach to the local community and gave MPs the opportunity to collect the concerns from citizens. The reports, of the Forums, containing recommendations on how to follow up on the discussed issues, were discussed in the Committee and with government representatives

## Strengthening the oversight/scrutiny function of the National Assembly of Serbia in the area of State budget expenditures

**Jelena Manic Petronikolos**

*Programme Analyst – Good Governance, UNDP Serbia*

Public expenditures in Serbia are reaching maximum limits, which in the context of the current economic situation in Serbia and global economic crisis, puts special emphasis on the scrutiny of public finances. UNDP Serbia's new project, funded by SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) will introduce an innovative instrument, an e-tool, which will provide real-time data on State budget expenditures to MPs. The project was developed as a direct answer to the requests of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia for assistance in strengthening its oversight/scrutiny function. Since the essence of oversight is oversight over public finances, the instrument will



enable MPs to access the necessary data in order to actually perform this function in a well-informed fashion. By virtue of their function, MPs may request such information. The tool will only make this information easily available to MPs at any time, with a click of a button.

The instrument would be comprised of an internal web application, with several levels of user rights. The application will be connected to the existing database in the Ministry of Finance and generate reports based on filters assigned by the end user. The project will first assess which kind of information MPs or support staff lack for monitoring State budget expenditures, availability of such data in the Ministry of Finance Treasury information system, and then perform system design, train in detail the users and staff that will maintain the system, and finally, monitor results and impact. The system has huge potentials, while the expenses for introducing it are minimal, since it will be attached to the existing Treasury information system and practically be only its extension, generating reports understandable to MPs.

Elements of such a system may be found in countries, founders of the Open Governance Partnership, but not much elsewhere in the world. The efficiency of such a tool has yet to be proved in terms of its impact on the performance of parliamentary oversight; however UNDP can be congratulated for taking the lead in piloting this innovative tool which, if successful, could become a model of best practice in the region.

UNDP Serbia's new three-year project 'Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament' valued over USD 1, 2 million was signed at a ceremony in the Central Hall of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Besides strengthening parliamentary oversight and financial accountability, by introducing and promoting an innovative tool to assist Members of the Parliament in scrutinizing government spending, the project will also help the Parliament and MPs engage citizens, particularly at the local level, through municipal site visits, mobile committee sessions, and public scrutiny hearings that will invite witness statements nation-wide. In addition, outreach, enabling two-way communication, will be introduced in pilot municipal assemblies.



Photo of the signing ceremony– from left to right:  
H.E. Mr. Erwin Helmut Hofer, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation  
Mr. Nebojsa Stefanovic, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia  
Mr. William S. Infante, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative

More information on the project is available [here](#).

## Support to the Salvadoran Women's Parliamentary Group (WPG)

Xenia Diaz

UNDP Gender Advisor El Salvador

### UNDP in El Salvador Supports the Design of the Women's Parliamentary Group Agenda 2012-2015

In the framework of the project "Pact for Gender Equality", UNDP in El Salvador accompanied the Women's Parliamentary Group (WPG) in the design of the Agenda of Women's Parliamentary Group for 2012-2015, period in which it is expected to strengthen efforts to eradicate violence against women and the search for equality between men and women.

The agenda was built in a participatory manner, with the active involvement of women Representatives from the different political parties (FMLN, ARENA, GANA and CD) and of the Gender Unit of the Legislative Assembly. They established consensus on the agenda for work during the current period. This was approved on August 17, 2012.

The approved strategic lines are:

1. Inter-institutional advancement for gender mainstreaming.
2. Public positioning of the WPG for the promotion of the parliamentary agenda in favor of women's rights.
3. Gender mainstreaming in the National Budget.
4. Promotion of legislative reforms and new normative frameworks in favor of women's rights.

UNDP El Salvador accompanies the design and presentation of the Gender Guideline Proposal for the 2013 Budget Development to the Ministry of Finance



Presentation of the "Gender Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2012"

As part of the Parliamentary Agenda for 2012-2015 and of the development process of the National Budget, last August 27th, 2012 the Women's Parliamentary Group (WPG) presented to the Ministry of the Treasury the document titled "Gender Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2012", of which UNDP and UNWOMEN participated in the development and presentation.

The proposal was constructed in consultation with the Justice Sector and several ministries and institutions. It aims to ensure budget items in favor of the implementation of the Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women and the Law for Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination against Women in 2013.

After the presentation of this document, an advocacy process was intended to take place in order to incorporate in an effective manner said budget items in the program. The WPG is committed to the development of budgetary indicators that will allow for follow up of the implementation of these resources.



Meeting of the Women's Parliamentary Group to design the Agenda for 2012-2015



## ***Women's Parliamentary Group Presents Action Protocol on Acts of Discrimination and Violence against Women with support from UNDP***

On August 23rd, 2012, the Women's Parliamentary Group formally presented the Action Protocol on Acts of Discrimination and Violence against Women, which was elaborated with support from UNWOMEN and UNDP. This document has been generated based on an institutional gender assessment developed in 2010, which established as an institutional problem the existence of acts of violence and / or discrimination against women workers and officials within the Legislature. With this tool, there will be a standardized procedure for handling of cases, avoiding these resulting in impunity.



Legislative drafting training in Suriname

In 2011 UNDP Suriname signed its first multi-year programme with the National Assembly of Suriname (Parliament). The partnership with the Parliament 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.

## **UNDP and the Parliament conclude course on Legislative Drafting in Suriname**

**Meriam Hubard**

*Governance Project Officer, UNDP Suriname*

Viable democracies and open societies depend on effective lawmaking, oversight and representation — the three chief functions of parliaments. Together with the National Assembly of Suriname, UNDP Suriname organized a course in legislative drafting for the Parliament. The course started on 10th July and concluded the 10th August, when participants received certificates of completion of the course. This workshop brought together around 58 participants, Members of Parliament, legal staff of the Parliament, the Central Bank of Suriname, the Ministry of Justice and Police, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the State Council, who have now gained insights and skills to draft and amend legislation. UNDP and the Parliament worked together with [AGORA](#) to conduct this course. AGORA is a multilateral network where more than 30 partners such as UNDP and the World Bank participate to assist national parliaments all over the world with the design and implementation of capacity strengthening programmes. The course was divided in three modules and the AGORA experts who conducted the course are: Johan Hommes, UNDP Chief Technical Advisor to the Parliament of Moldova; Peter Vanhoutte, co-founder and chairman of the Center for Democratic and Participatory Governance and Jan Deltour, Head of the Legislative Secretariat of the Belgian House of Representatives.

## **UNDP/FNA Study Tour for Women MPs**

UNDP, in partnership with the French National Assembly (FNA), organized a study tour on 9 - 13 July 2012, for francophone women MPs from Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Morocco and Tunisia (both opposition and majority parties), at the French Parliament. The first Vice-President of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire and of the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly participated in the event. The main purpose of the seminar was to enhance the knowledge of women parliamentarians with regards to political parties and parliamentary work, the relation and balance of power between democratic institutions, and gender equality legislation.

In addition to exchanging national experiences and best practices in terms of democratic transition processes and women's empowerment, and learning more about the organization and functioning of democratic parliaments (through the visit of the French National Assembly and the French Senate), the study tour was also an opportunity for UNDP to present, promote and discuss various parliamentary tools and knowledge products such as the [AGORA](#) and [iKNOW Politics](#) Web portals, the [Global Parliamentary Report](#), and the Guide on "[Empowering women for stronger political parties](#)". Other issues which raised particular interest include parliamentary oversight activities (i.e.: Questions to the Government), and the rights of the opposition in the legislative process. Also, the idea of creating a dedicated body within Parliament, in order to make sure gender issues are

discussed (such as a women caucus), was regarded by several parliamentarians as a potential source of inspiration for future reforms.

The network of women MPs established during the study tour will have the opportunity to continue to exchange on AGORA and iKNOW Politics where private groups have been set up.





## Launch of the Global Parliamentary Report in the USA: two dedicated events in NY and Washington DC

Two events were held in the United States, on 17 and 19 July 2012, in order to promote the Global Parliamentary Report jointly produced by UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), with the support of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for the event in Washington and by IPU and UNDP in New York. Both events gathered a total of 130 participants, with parliamentary development practitioners, academics, representatives from foundations and Embassies, UN agencies supporting parliaments and democratic governance, and representatives from numerous missions to the UN (including Ambassadors from Costa Rica, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Netherlands and New-Zealand).

In Washington, Ken Wollack, President of NDI, indicated that the international community should help parliaments fulfil their particular role in democracies, rather than focus solely on the Executive. Greg Power, lead author of the report, explained how parliaments try to respond to changing expectations of the public in terms of transparency, accountability and services. *“Parliaments need to make more efforts to be transparent and more accessible to citizens and youth, there is a need to engage them directly through new technologies”* - Sarah Mendelson, Deputy Assistant Administrator at USAID.

In New York, H. E. Mr. Herman Schaper, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations, began with welcoming remarks, indicating why the Government of the Netherlands felt it was essential to support the development of such a report, and how he was certain, as a former parliamentarian himself, that many recommendations could help parliaments become more effective and inclusive. Martin Chungong, Director of the Division for the promotion of Democracy at the IPU, along with UNDP, stressed that, while many parliaments face low levels of public trust, they have a key role to play in all democracies, and a particular political legitimacy that no other institution can replicate. However, they need to better involve the public in their legislative and oversight work.

The report explains how the growing expectations of the public have influenced the representative role of MPs and constituency work, how parliaments have renewed their outreach policies, and how more strategic approaches of their interactions with citizens should be developed. It indicates, in particular, how the increasing importance of constituency work and the parliamentary monitoring organizations actually represent a growing challenge to the parliamentarian in his everyday work, regardless of the type of electoral system in place.

*“The need to report, be transparent and accountable to the public, or provide individual services as expected by voters, should not distract MPs from their national role for lawmaking and oversight activities”* - Greg Power. One of the main challenges for parliaments is to incorporate into their work the expertise MPs hold from their field activities.

H. E. Ebrahim Rasool, Ambassador of South Africa to the United States, also a former MP, noted how the role of Parliaments faces both horizontal erosion, because of the growing dynamism of civil society, and vertical erosion, because of extended powers of international or regional organizations, such as the European Union or the World Trade Organization. He indicated that, in the future, parliaments should rethink their role, moving from the local to the national level and from tactical to strategic approaches.

During the broader discussion with all participants, the quality and the interest of the report have been stressed: the report has been considered very innovative and certainly as a major reference for any future research in this area. Several participants also suggested it could be useful to articulate this reflection with an analysis of gender equality within parliaments; the discrimination minorities still face in many political systems, the influence of electoral systems and the role of political parties – all possible topics for another report.

**The UNDP Parliamentary Development team remains available to any Country Office and Parliament willing to organize other events in order to discuss and promote the Global Parliamentary Report. The full Report, executive summary and other related information may be found at the [UNDP Website](#) and [AGORA Website](#).**