



UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

# Constitutional & Parliamentary Information

*Half-yearly Review of the Association  
of Secretaries General of Parliaments*

Welcome and Presentation of the Parliamentary System in Angola  
(*Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri, Angola*)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Parliaments and the role of the Secretary General: a six-point plan  
(*Ms Sarah Davies, United Kingdom*)

The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of AI  
(*Dr Michael Schäfer, Germany*)

The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of AI  
(*Mr Naim Çoban, Türkiye*)

Stronger together: on cooperation between parliamentary administrations  
(*Dr Georg Kleemann, Germany*)

Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation between Portuguese-speaking Parliaments  
(*Mr Albino de Azevedo Soares, Portugal*)

Cooperation between parliamentary administrations  
(*Mr Philippe Delivet, France*)

Cooperation between parliamentary administrations  
(*Mr Damien Cesselin, Francophone Parliamentary Assembly*)

Communicating Parliament: new challenges in the digital age  
(*Mr Rui Pereira Costa, Portugal*)

Building an open Parliament: fostering transparency and accountability  
(*Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Thailand*)

Strengthening parliamentary oversight and accountability: recommendations of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into allegations of State Capture and in the Public Sector  
(*Mr Xolile George, South Africa*)

Promoting transparency and accountability through better institutional communication in Parliaments  
(*Mr Edgar Sequeira Martins, Timor Leste*)

The renewal of representative democracies  
(*General Debate*)

The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of AI  
(*Mr Mahmoud Etman, Egypt*)

The relationship between the administration and parliamentarians  
(*General Debate*)

Changes in Parliament as a result of the pandemic  
(*Mr Ahmed Manna, Egypt*)

How have Parliaments changed since the pandemic  
(*Shri Sumant Narain, India*)

ASSOCIATION DES SECRÉTAIRES  
GÉNÉRAUX DES PARLEMENTS



*ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES  
GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS*

## **MINUTES OF THE AUTUMN SESSION**

**LUANDA (ANGOLA)**

**24-26 October 2023**



## **INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION AIMS**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, whose international Statute is outlined in a Headquarters Agreement drawn up with the Swiss federal authorities, is the only world-wide organisation of Parliaments.

The aim of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is to promote personal contacts between members of all Parliaments and to unite them in common action to secure and maintain the full participation of their respective States in the firm establishment and development of representative institutions and in the advancement of the work of international peace and cooperation, particularly by supporting the objectives of the United Nations.

In pursuance of this objective, the Union makes known its views on all international problems suitable for settlement by parliamentary action and puts forward suggestions for the development of parliamentary assemblies so as to improve the working of those institutions and increase their prestige.

### **Membership of the Union**

Please refer to IPU site (<http://www.ipu.org>).

### **Structure**

The organs of the Union are:

1. The Inter-Parliamentary Conference, which meets twice a year;
2. The Inter-Parliamentary Council, composed of two members of each affiliated Group;
3. The Executive Committee, composed of twelve members elected by the Conference, as well as of the Council President acting as *ex officio* President;
4. Secretariat of the Union, which is the international secretariat of the Organisation, the headquarters being located at:

Inter-Parliamentary Union  
5, chemin du Pommier  
Case postale 330  
CH-1218 Le Grand Saconnex  
Genève (Suisse)

## **ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS**

### **Minutes of the Autumn Session 2023**

**Luanda**

**24-26 October 2023**

#### **List of attendance**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>
Mr Genci GJONÇAJ	Albania
Mr Pedro AGOSTINHO DE NERI	Angola
Mr Alexis WINTONIAK	Austria
Mrs Barbara DITHAPO	Botswana
Mr Mauro BARRETO	Brazil
Mr Renovat NIYONZIMA	Burundi
Mr OUM Sarith	Cambodia
Mr Ghislain Junior MORDJIM	Central African Republic
Mr Jean NGUVULU KHOJI	Congo (Democratic Republic of)
Mr Jean MUKUALA BATEKE	Congo (Democratic Republic of)
Mr Ahmed MANNA	Egypt
Mr Bienvenido Ekua ESONO	Equatorial Guinea
Mr Victorino Nka OBIANG MAYE	Equatorial Guinea
Mr Kayima KEBEDE	Ethiopia
Mrs Jeanette EMBERSON	Fiji
Ms Maija-Leena PAAVOLA	Finland

Dr Georg KLEEMANN	Germany
Dr Michael SCHÄFER	Germany
Mr Cyril NSIAH	Ghana
Mr Souleymane TOURÉ	Guinea
Mr José Carlos RODRIGUES DA FONSECA	Guinea-Bissau
Mr Sherlock E. ISAACS	Guyana, Co-operative Republic of
Mrs Audur Elva JONSDÓTTIR	Iceland
Mr Alireza Sharifi BARZEGAR	Iran
Mr Safwan Basheer Younus AL GERGERI	Iraq
Mr Sadeq Jumaa HAMEED	Iraq
Mr Martin GROVES	Ireland
Mrs Fiona KALEMBA	Malawi
Mrs Luvsandorj ULZIISAIKHAN	Mongolia
Mr Najib EL KHADI	Morocco
Mrs Lydia KANDETU	Namibia
Dr Bharat Raj GAUTAM	Nepal
Dr Remco NEHMELMAN	Netherlands
Mr Khalid AL SAADI	Oman
Mr Ahmed Mohammed AL NADABI	Oman
Mr Tahir HUSSAIN	Pakistan
Mr Mohammad Qasim SAMAD KHAN	Pakistan
Mr Albino de Azevedo SOARES	Portugal

Mr Ahmad AL FADALA	Qatar
Mr Sosthène CYITATIRE	Rwanda
Mr Domingos José DA TRINDADE BOA MORTE	Sao Tomé and Príncipe
Mr Mohamed ALMUTAIRI	Saudi Arabia
Mr Amadou THIMBO	Senegal
Mr Abdelnasir GULED	Somalia
Mr Xolile GEORGE	South Africa
Mr Masibulele XASO	South Africa
Mr Makuc Makuc NGONG	South Sudan
Mrs Nenelwa Joyce MWIHAMBI	Tanzania
Ms Napaporn JAISAJJA	Thailand
Ms Steejit TAIPIBOONSUK	Thailand
Mr Edgar Sequeira MARTINS	Timor Leste
Mr Paul GAMUSI WABWIRE	Uganda
Dr Omar AL NUAIMI	United Arab Emirates
Mrs Afra ALBASTI	United Arab Emirates
Ms Sarah DAVIES	United Kingdom
Dr José Pedro MONTERO	Uruguay

#### **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

Mr Damien CESSÉLIN	Parliamentary Assembly of francophone countries
Mr John MUTEKA	East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)
Mr John AZUMAH	ECOWAS Parliament

Mrs Boemo SEKGOMA	Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC)
-------------------	--

## SUBSTITUTES

(for Mr/s)	
Mr Rustam MAHMUDOV (for Mr Farid HAJIYEV)	Azerbaijan
Mr Kibria MAZUMDAR (for Mr K. Abdus SALAM)	Bangladesh
Mr Jean-Philippe BROCHU (for/pour MR Eric JANSE)	Canada
Mr Juan Pablo GALLEGUILLOS (for Mr Miguel LANDEROS PERKIC)	Chile
Mr Philippe DELIVET (for Mr Eric TAVERNIER)	France
Mr <i>Sumant NARAIN</i> (for Mr <i>Pramod Chandra MODY</i> )	India
Ms Mellissa ENGLISH (for Mr Peter FINNEGAN)	Ireland
Mr Ryohei IMUTA (for Mr Fumitake KOBAYASHI)	Japan
Mr Ahmed Saad Younes HASHASH (for Mr Abdualla ALMASRI)	Libya
Ms Filomena GRACHANE (for Mr Alfredo Vasco NOGUEIRA NAMPETE)	Mozambique
Mr Bashir Amine YERO (for Mr Sani Magaji TAMBAWAL)	Nigeria
Ms Izabela CHENCIAN (for Mr Mario-Ovidiu OPREA)	Romania
Mr Naim ÇOBAN (for Mr Talip UZUN)	Türkiye
Mr NGUYEN Manh Hung (for Mr CUONG Bui Van)	Vietnam

## ALSO PRESENT



Mr Ahcène DJOUAARA	Algeria
Mr Armand PALM	Burkina Faso
Mr Ghislain ESSABE	Gabon
Mr Gholamreza Nouri GHEZELJEH	Iran
Mr Stephen NJENGA	Kenya
Mr Efraim JANE	Namibia
Ms Wilmary TSAMAREB	Namibia
Mr Rui COSTA	Portugal
Mr Korakot KONGTHONG	Thailand
Mr Kanon SUKPORNCHAIKAK	Thailand
Mr Stephen KAWIMBE	Zambia
Mr Charles N. KADONYA	East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)
Ms Emiliana TUHOYE	East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)
Ms Wawa DAHAS	Pan-African Parliament
Mr Benoit ONAMBELE	Parliamentary Assembly of francophone countries
Yapoka MUNGAMA	SADC PF
Mr Unaro MANGENDJE	SADC PF

## **APOLOGIES**

Ms Claressa SURTEES	Australia
Mrs Kareema ALABBASI	Bahrain
Mr K.MR Abdus SALAM	Bangladesh

Mrs Stefana KARASLAVOVA	Bulgaria
Mr Eric JANSE	Canada
Mr Gérald LAFRENIÈRE	Canada
Mr Miguel LANDEROS PERKIC	Chile
Mr Eric TAVERNIER	France
Mr Georgios MYLONAKIS	Greece
Mrs Ragna ÁRNADÓTTIR	Iceland
Mr Fumitake KOBAYASHI	Japan
Mr Fumiyaso ITO	Japan
Mr György SUCH	Hungary
Mr LEE Kwang-jae	Korea (Republic of)
Mr Reginald S. VELASCO	Philippines
Mr Adam NIEMCZEWSKI	Poland
Mr Manuel CAVERO	Spain
Mr Fernando DORADO FRIAS	Spain
Mrs Ruth Lucia DE WINDT	Suriname
Ms Agatha RAMDASS	Suriname
Mr Philippe SCHWAB	Switzerland
Mr Talip UZUN	Türkiye
Mr Simon BURTON	United Kingdom
Ms Chloe MAWSON	United Kingdom

Mr Tom GOLDSMITH	United Kingdom
Mr CUONG Bui Van	Vietnam
Ms D. CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS	Council of Europe

## Table of contents

<b>MINUTES OF THE AUTUMN SESSION</b>	<b>1</b>
List of attendance	4
<b>FIRST SITTING</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Tuesday 24 October 2023 (morning)</b>	<b>14</b>
1. Opening of the session	14
2. Members	14
3. Orders of the day	15
4. Interpretation	20
5. Membership fees	20
6. Executive Committee elections	20
7. Collaboration with the IPU	21
8. ASGP institutional communication	21
9. Welcome and brief presentation from Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Angola, on the parliamentary system in Angola	21
10. Concluding remarks	21
<b>SECOND SITTING</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Tuesday 24 October 2023 (afternoon)</b>	<b>23</b>
1. Introductory remarks	23
2. Ms Barbara Dithapo and Ms Laurence Marzal update on the IPU-ASGP project on 'Welcoming new members of parliament'	23
<b>THEME: THE SKILLS OF PARLIAMENTARY ADMINISTRATIONS IN TERMS OF THE REGULATION AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE</b>	<b>24</b>
3. Communication by Ms Sarah Davies, Clerk Assistant, UK House of Commons, on 'Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments and the role of the Secretary-General: a six-point plan'	24
4. Communication by Dr Michael Schäfer, Secretary General of the German Bundestag, on 'The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence'	33
5. Communication by Naim Çoban, Deputy Secretary-General of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, on 'The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence'	37
<b>THEME: COOPERATION BETWEEN PARLIAMENTARY ADMINISTRATIONS</b>	<b>39</b>
6. Communication by Dr Georg Kleemann, Deputy Secretary General of the German Bundesrat, on 'Stronger together. On cooperation between parliamentary administrations'	39
7. Communication by Mr Albino de Azevedo Soares, Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal on 'Inter-parliamentary Cooperation between Portuguese speaking Parliaments'	42

8. Communication by Mr Philippe Delivet, Director of International Affairs in the French Senate, on 'Cooperation between parliamentary administrations'	46
9. Communication by Mr Damien Cesselin, Secretary General of the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly, on 'Cooperation between parliamentary administrations'	50
10. Concluding remarks	56
<b>THIRD SITTING</b>	57
Wednesday 25 October 2023 (morning)	57
1. Introductory remarks	57
2. Members	57
3. Orders of the Day	57
<b>THEME: PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH BETTER INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION IN PARLIAMENTS</b>	58
4. Communication: Mr Rui Pereira Costa, Deputy Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, on 'Communicating Parliament: new challenges in the digital age'	58
5. Communication: Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Thailand on 'Building an open Parliament: fostering transparency and accountability'	63
6. Communication: Mr Xolile George, Secretary to the Parliament of South Africa, on 'Strengthening parliamentary oversight and accountability: recommendations of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into allegations of State Capture in the Public Sector'	69
7. Communication: Mr Edgar Sequeira Martins, Secretary General of the National Parliament of Timor Leste, 'Promoting transparency and accountability through better institutional communication in Parliaments'	77
8. GENERAL DEBATE: The renewal of representative democracies in a time of crisis: challenges and opportunities?	81
9. Concluding remarks	86
<b>FOURTH SITTING</b>	87
Wednesday 25 October 2023 (afternoon)	87
1. Introductory remarks	87
2. Update on the Centre for Innovation in Parliament	87
3. Workshops on the IPU's Climate Action Plan ahead of COP28	87
4. Guide on the role of Secretary General in the 21st Century, with a particular focus on artificial intelligence'	88
5. Communication by Mr Mahmoud Etman, Secretary general of the Egyptian Senate, 'The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence'	91
6. Elections	93
7. Concluding remarks	94

<b>FIFTH SITTING</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Thursday 26 October 2023 (morning)</b>	<b>95</b>
1.    Introductory remarks	95
2.    GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: The relationship between the administration and parliamentarians	95
3.    Concluding Remarks	96
<b>SIXTH SITTING</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Wednesday 26 October 2023 (afternoon)</b>	<b>97</b>
1.    Introductory remarks	97
2.    Recent developments at the Inter-Parliamentary Union	97
<b>THEME: HOW HAVE PARLIAMENTS CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC?</b>	<b>98</b>
3.    Communication: Mr Ahmed Manna, Secretary General of the Egyptian House of Representatives, on 'Changes in Parliament as a result of the pandemic'	98
4.    Communication: Shri Sumant Narain, Joint Secretary of the Rajya Sabha of India on 'How have parliaments changed since the pandemic'	100
5.    Budget	104
6.    Draft agenda for the next meeting in Geneva (Switzerland), March 2024	104
7.    Concluding remarks	105

# FIRST SITTING

**Tuesday 24 October 2023 (morning)**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President, in the Chair**

---

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 11.13AM

## **1. Opening of the session**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, opened the session and welcomed members of the Association, he thanked the Angolan Parliament for their warm welcome.

## **2. Members**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, told the Association that the secretariat had received the following requests for membership, which had been put before the Executive Committee, and agreed to:

*For membership:*

<b>Mr Tenzin THINLEY</b>	Secretary General of the National Council, Bhutan (replacing Mr Chencho TSHERING)
<b>Mr LIM Bunhok</b>	Deputy Secretary General of the National Assembly, Cambodia (replacing Mr SRUN Dara)
<b>Mr Damien CHAMUSSY</b>	Secretary General of the National Assembly and the Presidency, France (replacing Mr Michel MOREAU)
<b>Mr Alireza Sharifi BARZEGAR</b>	Secretary General of the Islamic Parliament of Iran (replacing Mr Ali Mohammad GHOLIHA)
<b>Mr Geert Jan HAMILTON</b>	Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Netherlands and Honorary Member of the ASGP (replacing Ms Simone ROOS)
<b>Ms Zeydi Cristina ZELAYA DELGADO</b>	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Nicaragua

<b>Mr Sani Magaji TAMBAWAL</b>	Clerk of the National Assembly, Nigeria (replacing Mr Amos OLATUNDE)
<b>Dr Yahaya DANZARIA</b>	Clerk of the House of Representatives, Nigeria (replacing Mr Francis Chinedu AKUBUEZE)
<b>Mr Francis Chinedu AKUBUEZE</b>	Clerk of the Senate, Nigeria (replacing Mr Dauda Ibrahim EL LADAN)
<b>Dr Giovanni FORNO FLORES</b>	Secretary General of the Congress of the Republic, Peru (replacing Mr José Francisco CEVASCO PIEDRA)
<b>Mr Domingos DA TRINDADE BOA MORTE</b>	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Sao Tome and Principe
<b>Mrs Kushani ROHANADEERA</b>	Secretary General of Parliament, Sri Lanka (replacing Mr Dhammika DASANAYAKE)
<b>Mr Edgar SEQUEIRA MARTINS</b>	Secretary General of the National Parliament, Timor Leste (replacing Mr Adelino A. DE JESUS)
<b>Mr Lotfi BELAZI</b>	Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies, Tunisia
<b>Mr Talip UZUN</b>	Secretary General of the Grand National Assembly, Türkiye (replacing Mr Mehmet Ali KUMBUZOĞLU)
<b>Mr Tom GOLDSMITH</b>	Clerk of the House of Commons, United Kingdom (replacing Sir John BENDER)

The new Members were accepted.

### **3. Orders of the day**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, recalled that the agenda for the meeting had been circulated to members via email and the latest version, approved by the Executive Committee, was available on the website.

He notified members that, unusually, three countries on the agenda have been permitted to present two communications: Germany, Egypt and Portugal. As there was sufficient space on the agenda, exceptionally the Executive Committee approved these applications.

***Tuesday 24 October (morning)***

***9am***

***Meeting of the Executive Committee***



\*\*\*

**11 am**

- *Opening of the session*
- *Orders of the day for the conference*
  - *New members*
- *Announcement regarding elections*

\*\*\*

- *Welcome and brief presentation on the parliamentary system in Angola*

**Tuesday 24 October (afternoon)**

**2.30 pm**

- *Ms Barbara Dithapo and Ms Laurence Marzal update on the IPU-ASGP project on 'Welcoming new members of parliament';*

***THEME: The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence***

- *Communication by Ms Sarah Davies, Clerk Assistant, UK House of Commons, on 'Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments and the role of the Secretary-General: a six-point plan'*
- *Communication by Dr Michael Schäfer, Secretary General of the German Bundestag, on 'The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence'*
- *Communication by Deputy Secretary-General Naim ÇOBAN of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, on 'The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence'*

***THEME: Cooperation between parliamentary administrations***

- *Communication by Dr Georg Kleemann, Deputy Secretary General of the German Bundesrat, on 'Stronger together. On cooperation between parliamentary administrations'*
- *Communication by Mr Philippe Delivet, Director of International Affairs in the French Senate, on 'Cooperation between parliamentary administrations'*

- *Communication by Mr Albino de Azevedo Soares, Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal on 'Parliamentary Cooperation between Portuguese speaking Parliaments'*
- *Communication by Mr Damien Cesselin, Secretary General of the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly, on 'Cooperation between parliamentary administrations'*

\*\*\*

***Wednesday 25 October (morning)***

***9 am***

*Meeting of the Executive Committee*

\*\*\*

***10 am***

***THEME: Promoting transparency and accountability through better institutional communication in Parliaments***

- *Communication by Mr Rui Pereira Costa, Deputy Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, on 'Communicating Parliament: new challenges in the digital age'*
- *Communication by Mr Sharifi Barzegar, Secretary General of Islamic parliament of Iran, on "Transparency and accountability as the two necessary components in the optimal management of parliamentary administrations"*
- *Communication by Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Thailand on 'Building an open Parliament: fostering transparency and accountability'*
- *Communication by Mr George Xolile, Secretary to the Parliament of South Africa, on 'Strengthening parliamentary oversight and accountability: recommendations of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into allegations of State Capture in the Public Sector'*

***General Debate: The renewal of representative democracies in a time of crisis:  
challenges and opportunities?***

*Moderator: Mr Georg Kleemann, Deputy Secretary General of the Bundesrat*

- *What are the challenges facing representative democracy?*
- *Do the practices of parliaments need to change to better fit the modern world?*
- *How can parliaments bring about a renewal of representative democracy?*

***Wednesday 25 October (afternoon)***

***2.30 pm***

*Joint session ASGP-IPU*

*The digital transformation of parliaments*

***4 pm***

*Update on the Centre for Innovation in Parliament, Andy Richardson*

**Update on ASGP projects**

- Kareen Jabre, ‘Workshops on the IPU’s Climate Action Plan ahead of COP28’.
- Vice-President Remco Nehmelman on ‘Guide on the role of Secretary General in the 21st Century, with a particular focus on artificial intelligence’

\*\*\*

***Thursday 26 October (morning)***

***9am***

*Meeting of the Executive Committee*

\*\*\*

**GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: The relationship  
between the administration and parliamentarians**

Moderator: José Pedro Montero, Second Secretary General of the Senate of Uruguay

- *Is it necessary to set rules to govern the relationship between administrative staff and MPs (eg. behaviour code, standards of service, clearly defined roles)?*
- *How does the political context in which MPs work (short mandate, media scrutiny, party politics) shape the relationship with the administration?*
- *Is the political context so unique that it merits different principles of employment law than other industries?*

\*\*\*

***Tuesday 26 October (afternoon)***

**2.30pm**

Presentation on recent developments in the IPU

***THEME: How have Parliaments changed as a result of the pandemic?***

- *Communication by Mr Ahmed Manna, Secretary General of the Egyptian House of Representatives, on 'Changes in Parliament as a result of the pandemic'*

\*\*\*

- *Administrative questions*
  - *Budget*
- *Draft agenda for the next meeting in Spring 2023*

**5pm**

*Closure of the session*

The agenda for the Session was agreed to.

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, first thanked members for volunteering to present the communications then reminded colleagues of the usual speaking limits:

- **10 minutes** for moderators of general debates;
- **10 minutes** for the presentation of a communication, not including questions; and
- **5 minutes** for all other oral interventions

He invited members to begin thinking about themes and general debates for the Autumn session.

#### **4. Interpretation**

He informed members that interpretation for the session is provided in English and French by the ASGP, in Arabic with thanks to the Association of Arab parliaments and in Portuguese and Turkish. He reminded members that they could speak only in languages for which simultaneous interpretation is provided.

He reminded members that ASGP will be trailing a new Zoom platform in Geneva in March 2024 which should reduce costs and enable more parliaments to have an additional channel if they wish.

#### **5. Membership fees**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, reminded the Association that membership fees are essential to the working of the Association. He announced that most members are now up-to-date with the payment of their fees. He invited anyone who is unsure of their payment situation to contact the secretariat.

He reminded colleagues that the membership fee is payable for each chamber and that under the rules of the Association members can be suspended if they have not paid for 3 years and have voting rights suspended after 2 years.

#### **6. Executive Committee elections**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, reminded members that there are two vacant places on the Executive Committee and set out the election timetable and process. He recalled that it is customary for members of the Executive Committee to be active contributors to the work of the Association.

He reminded members of the Association's rules regarding ensuring a diversity of gender, geographical spread and language on the Executive Committee. Women are currently underrepresented.

He emphasised that only members present in Angola who have paid their subscription fees may vote or stand as candidate for election. He advised any members who are unsure about their membership fees to speak to the secretariat.

## 7. Collaboration with the IPU

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, set out the different points of collaboration with the IPU, as listed on the ASGP agenda.

## 8. ASGP institutional communication

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, updated the Association on the work undertaken by the secretariat to improve the ASGP's institutional communication through the commissioning of a new logo to improve ASGP brand identity and the modernisation of the ASGP website.

**Joint-Secretary, Elektra Garvie-Adams**, presented the key features of the new website to the Association.

## 9. Welcome and brief presentation from Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Angola, on the parliamentary system in Bahrain

**Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Angola** gave a presentation on the parliamentary system in Angola.

His presentation can be found on the ASGP website, it is only available in Portuguese:

<https://asgp.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Pedro-de-Neri-Powerpoint.pdf>



**Mr Najib El Khadi, President** thanked Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri for his presentation and commented that it was a profoundly moving gesture to hold a moments silence in honour of the victims of the earthquake in Morocco.

**Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri**, presented the president with a book.

*[Applause]*

## 10. Concluding remarks

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President** thanked Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri for his fascinating speech and reminded them to return to the room at 2.30pm for the afternoon session.

He closed the sitting.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.22PM.

## SECOND SITTING

**Tuesday 24 October 2023 (afternoon)**

Mr Najib El Khadi, President, in the Chair

---

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 2.40PM

### **1. Introductory remarks**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, opened the sitting and welcomed members back into the room.

He informed members that a team of researchers had contacted the ASGP about a research project on parliaments and control of time. He informed members that the Executive Committee decided that the ASGP could not be represented directly at this conference. However, if any member of the Association wished to participate, in a bi-lateral relationship with the research group, they could contact the secretariat for more information. He concluded that the Executive Committee would like to support academic research into the work of parliaments and is disseminating information about the conference.



### **2. Ms Barbara Dithapo and Ms Laurence Marzal update on the IPU-ASGP project on 'Welcoming new members of parliament'**

The project commenced with a short study based on a survey in French, conducted in 13 French-speaking chambers. Presentations took place in Chad (2021), Haiti (2022) and Djibouti (2023).

Successes and shortcomings of this survey were shared at the ASGP meeting during the 145th IPU Assembly. In March 2023 at the 146th Assembly in Bahrain, the Association agreed to conduct a major survey on this issue which would be sent to all parliaments.

Ms Barbara Dithapo, member of the Executive Committee, was nominated by the ASGP Executive Committee to liaise between the ASGP and IPU on the project.



#### Project Objectives:

- To investigate how Parliaments prepare for the welcome of new MPs covering regulatory environment, pre-welcome activities and swearing in processes (if any).
- To analyse the effectiveness of capacity-building activities.
- To check the relevance and appropriateness of the programmes put in place.

The survey strives for documentation of good practices for Parliaments to learn and benchmark on preparedness measures and to improve capacity building of new MPs across IPU membership.

The full survey will be implemented the last week of November 2023 with a target of 80% responses from all members of the ASGP.

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, thanked Ms Dithapo and Ms Marzal for their excellent presentation.

### **THEME: THE SKILLS OF PARLIAMENTARY ADMINISTRATIONS IN TERMS OF THE REGULATION AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

#### **3. Communication by Ms Sarah Davies, Clerk Assistant, UK House of Commons, on ‘Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments and the role of the Secretary-General: a six-point plan’**

**Ms Sarah Davies** presented the following communication:

Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments and the role of the Secretary-General: a six-point plan

Abstract: This paper sets out some of the approaches being used within the UK Parliament to discuss the risks and opportunities presented by latest developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI). It sits alongside the questionnaire circulated by the Executive Committee. I propose a six-point plan for Secretaries-General as a prompt for examining how their Parliaments are using AI.

Figure 1: six-point plan

<p><b>Who is talking to who about AI in your Parliament? Is this only a “digital” discussion? Is there a forum in your Parliament bringing together the interested groups of parliamentary staff listed in this</b></p>
---

**paper?**

**Where are your sources of expertise on data and AI? Does it span internal and external staff? How are your Libraries and data experts involved?**

**Has your Parliament produced staff guidance on use of Generative AI such as ChatGPT? If so, is it widely shared?**

**Are you assessing potential Chamber-related opportunities and risks in key areas such as questions, indexing, transcribing and legislation?**

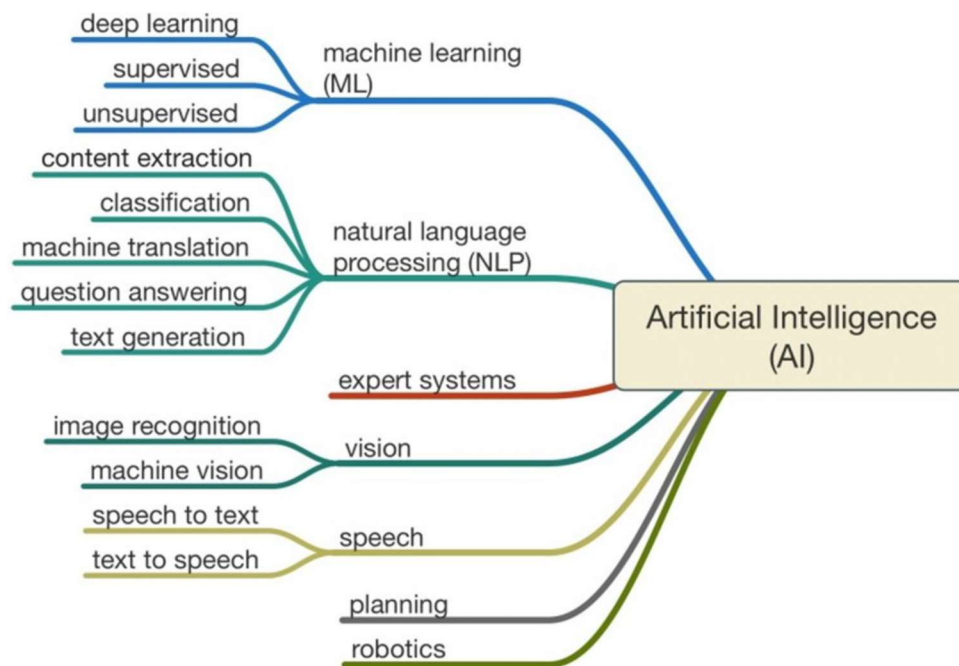
**Has your Parliament made APIs available to ChatGPT, or at least have a timetable for the process of making such a decision?**

**Are you confident that your scrutiny function has the expertise it needs to consider these developments effectively, and is joined up to those who are assessing the implications for front-of-house and back-office operations across your Parliament?**

## **Introduction**

1. The development of forms of "artificial intelligence", and discussions about their potential, have been going on for decades, beginning with the groundbreaking work of mathematician Alan Turing in the 1950s (hence the term 'Turing test' for AI systems). We are all familiar with some of the well-used forms of AI - algorithms already show us what we might want to watch, buy or read next, and when we use our smartphones we are used to working with suggestions given to us through predictive text. This chart helpfully breaks down some of the things we are talking about when we discuss "AI".

**Figure 2: Examples of narrow AI (English only)**



2. Recent discussions have focussed on rapid developments in generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT. ChatGPT was launched by the OpenAI organisation in November 2022, and is an artificial intelligence chatbot built on top of a large language learning model. In March 2023 OpenAI launched GPT-4, which had superior performance and can be embedded into a range of tools, including Microsoft's Bing search tool. This has raised the profile of AI more generally, at a time when these processing systems are becoming increasingly powerful and "big data" is used in the real world for systems that touch our lives in many ways - exam marking during the pandemic, medical processing of routine scans and so on.
3. There have been several conferences covering this from the parliamentary angle (most recently the LegisTech Forum – 4<sup>th</sup> edition: the emergence of AI in Parliaments), a unit in the European Parliament exploring the opportunities of AI for the institution's work and intense legislative work in the US Congress (<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47644>).
4. Various Parliaments have produced research listing their experiences and those of others, for example this research paper from Parliament of New South Wales, [\*The use of artificial intelligence by government: parliamentary and legal issues\*](#).
5. The recent ASGP-IPU *Guide to digital transformation in Parliaments* touches on AI in a number of contexts: as a technology trend and a potential

source of automatic transcription. The report is available in four languages: [French](#), [English](#), [Arabic](#) and [Spanish](#) on the [IPU website](#). There is also an upcoming specific IPU event on legislative developments, which is currently open for registration: [Transforming Parliaments: Artificial Intelligence in the lawmaking work | Inter-Parliamentary Union \(ipu.org\)](#)

## **What do Parliaments do and how does that affect how we use AI?**

6. Parliaments create mechanisms to take political decisions within a rules-based framework which is stable, but flexible enough to evolve and to adapt. They are typically generators of large volumes of text and data through processes such as passing legislation, receiving documents, scrutiny of government policy and transcripts of debates and committee sittings. Much of this is published and broadcast.
7. Running Parliaments also involves organising their functions from an administrative perspective, often in a relatively tight public sector fiscal context. They are multi-functional organisations which arguably have a tendency to work in silos and their structures can be slow to adapt to new developments. This creates a risk that an Administration's response to a novel situation (like AI) will take place in a hap-hazard and disconnected way. A key role of the Secretary-General is to identify such novel situations and lead next steps to get the right people working together, wherever they work in the Parliament.
8. In the UK House of Commons I identified this challenge around 6 months ago, and set up a series of multi-disciplinary discussions, building on that with agenda items at our Executive Board and presentations to senior leaders as part of our "2030 trends" work. This paper presents some of the outcomes and learnings from those discussions.

**Plan point one: who is talking to who about AI? Is this only a “digital” discussion? Is there a forum in your Parliament bringing together the groups listed in this paper?**

**Plan point two: where are your sources of expertise on data and AI? Does it span internal and external staff? How are your Libraries and data experts involved?**

9. From our experience, we have found that the following functions need to be represented around the table during parliamentary AI discussions:
  - Procedural Clerks (particularly those dealing with indexing and legislation, and language-based processes such as tabling questions)

- Hansard
- Data indexers (may be based in Library or Digital)
- Digital colleagues including developers, cyber and information security
- Information management experts
- Library colleagues
- Scrutiny/Committee colleagues
- Possibly Government legal drafters
- Maybe someone from another Parliament to share experiences, potentially government digital leaders, partner organisations or fully external Non-Executive Directors (NEDs)

10. Three other key principles, whoever is involved in the discussions, are that there should be **sceptics as well as enthusiasts around the table**, that there should be **awareness at Managing Director/Executive Board level about the key issues** (including training for non-experts holding senior positions), and that there should be an awareness of the **political context of AI discussions and the potential implications for Member services**.

11. There are possible applications of certain forms of AI to improve the effectiveness of Parliaments. These include everything from job application generation and the impact on recruitment, developing public engagement and interaction with citizens and customer/office management. At the same time, it is important to note that AI exacerbates challenges found in many Parliaments in recruiting expert digital staff, given public sector pay constraints. These opportunities and risks could form the basis of a paper on their own and are not covered in detail here.

**Plan point three: has your Parliament produced staff guidance on use of Generative AI such as Chat GPT? If so, is it widely shared?**

12. One of the tangible early products of our series of discussions was bringing forward new guidance for staff using generative AI in Parliament. This included a new Generative AI hub on Sharepoint and bespoke guidance for the use of generative AI on Parliamentary devices. The hub stresses that *"If used well, AI technologies (including generative AI) have the potential to bring benefits to Parliament from, for example, improving efficiency and productivity to enabling new insights and capabilities. However, it is important to recognise that there are also significant risks and challenges associated with the use of these technologies, including issues related to privacy, bias, security, and accountability."*

13. The detailed guidance is summarised in the following dos and don'ts:

Dos	Don'ts
Conform to current guidance on data use and installation of new software on Parliamentary devices. Remember data protection laws	Don't use AI tools which then claim intellectual property rights on the parliamentary content inputted
Acknowledge when output has been generated using AI.	Don't enter any restricted or above parliamentary information or personal data.
Understand what generative AI is good at doing and what it isn't good at (e.g. it's not a search engine)	Don't use generative AI on a parliamentary device without heeding PDS advice and guidance (see AI hub).
Ask the Parliamentary Digital Service for further guidance if you're unsure. (Start with the digital business partners)	Don't trust the output without applying appropriate rigour. Check with the libraries if you want to be more certain of your research.
Consider engaging with events and the chat forum to share best practice.	Don't enter information that could be seen as showing the "approval" or "intent" of Parliament.
Explore, experiment, and understand generative AI being mindful of this and other guidance.	Don't use your parliament email address when registering for generative AI services
If you discover a potential use for generative AI in your work, please let PDS colleagues know. Business partners should be first port of call.	

**Plan point four: Are you assessing potential Chamber-related opportunities and risks: in key areas such as questions, indexing, transcribing and legislation?**

14. Given the text-heavy nature of legislatures, there are potential opportunities to manage their information and information processes using AI. Examples include whether AI can assist with suggested drafting for Questions, for indexing procedural precedents, forming part of the transcription process

and suggesting amendments to bills or otherwise forming part of the legislative process. These discussions are at an early stage in the UK House of Commons other than for transcribing - Hansard has incorporated language learning elements into its reporting process for over five years.

15. A particular challenge arises when procedural experts lack digital experience, and are so busy with procedural business as usual that it becomes difficult to step back and explore the potential benefits and challenges of process change. There are also questions around timing and value for money. Should Parliaments be “early adopters” or adopt a more risk-averse approach, following other sectors and learn from their experience? There is also a risk that the many commercial operators in this sector sell solutions to Parliaments based on incomplete information, with Administrations becoming too dependent on external providers.
16. Reputational issues around Parliaments and AI cut in other ways. Concern has been expressed by broadcasting colleagues about deepfake broadcast coverage, though we are not aware of this having happened yet in a directly parliamentary context in the UK.

### Indexing

17. What is an index for? The Journal index does many things but in part it is for skilled practitioners to work out the rules, and see if something similar happened before. Could an AI index distinguish between business of the House motions, allocation of time motions and programme motions on Bills while still seeing they were also the same sort of thing?

### Legislative drafting

18. There is a specialist discussion ongoing in the legislative drafting space on the use of large language models, both within Parliaments and legislative drafting offices.
19. This relates to the scrutiny of ADM (automated decision-making), which involves the use of expert systems, machine learning or a combination of the two. ADM breaks a decision down into a set of 'if then' rules and criteria, so that a decision is understood as an algorithm that selects from predetermined alternatives. Human involvement in an ADMS depends on the position of the system in a spectrum from partial to full automation.
20. Some of the questions around legislative drafting and AI relate to how a particular piece of legislation can be developed into an ADM and how that

can be built into the drafting process, and other parts relate how this can be scrutinised by Parliament.

21. There have been legal cases in Australia and elsewhere on whether a decision by an automated system is a "decision" for the purposes of administrative law, such as *Pintarich v Commissioner of Taxation*. There is also a case in Singapore (*Quoine*) which considered the doctrine of contractual mistake within the context of a trading error made on an ADM cryptocurrency platform, specifically whether an ADM platform could enter a transaction which had a legally binding effect, and if so, how knowledge could be attributed to the ADM platform to ascertain whether such an agreement was in fact entered in error.
22. Reflecting the high level of interest in these issues, the IPU Open Data hub and IT governance hub, within the framework of the IPU centre for innovation in Parliament, have organised a webinar on AI in lawmaking on Monday 30 October, which remains open for registration.  
<https://www.ipu.org/event/transforming-parliaments-artificial-intelligence-in-lawmaking-work>

**Plan point five: has your Parliament made APIs available to ChatGPT, or at least have a timetable for the process of making such a decision?**

23. Given that these models work on data sets, this work highlights the need for Parliaments to ensure that their own data sets are made available in an appropriate form. Based on information about where ChatGPT got its information from, the highest ranked UK Parliament site is [www.api.parliament.uk](http://www.api.parliament.uk) - others were very low. This only has treaties and SIs on it but is well structured and linked, and is GPT friendly.
24. Current work within Parliament on an Open Data Platform should make it easier for ChatGPT and others to bring our information into their model. It won't just be the APIs but also the structured linked way of publishing data that will make it easier for these tools, and also Google.
25. Do Parliaments want ChatGPT to consume their data and how should this affect how data are output and produced? Does a focus on a particular API mean that the information produced is less accessible to some other users, for example certain academics?

**Plan point six: are you confident that your scrutiny function has the expertise it needs to consider these developments effectively, and is joined up to those**



**who are assessing the implications for front-of-house and back-office operations across Parliament?**

26. In the House of Lords, two Committees are currently working on AI. One was set up specifically to conduct an inquiry into AI in Weapon Systems (the members of which include a former Secretary-General of the House of Commons who is now a peer—Lord Lisvane/Sir Robert Rogers). The other one, the Communications and Digital Select Committee, is conducting an inquiry on large language models. Other House of Lords Committees have conducted similar inquiries in the past: in 2018, a special inquiry Committee reported on whether the UK was “ready, willing, and able” for AI, and in 2021 the Justice and Home Affairs Committee reported on the use of AI by the police and in the justice system.

27. In the House of Commons, the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee has generally led the way, with its July 2023 report *The governance of artificial intelligence: interim report* setting out what it described as the twelve challenges of AI governance.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmsctech/1769/summary.html>

28. The cross-functional discussions we are having include Select Committee colleagues and experts, though there is more we could do to join up work in this area.

## **Conclusion**

29. This paper has drawn on my experience, as a Deputy Secretary-General and a non-digital specialist, in convening discussions across Parliament to talk about the challenges, opportunities and risks associated with AI. As part of my MSc in Organisational Psychology at Birkbeck, University of London, I will be analysing reactions among parliamentary administrations to novel mechanisms such as AI, and would welcome feedback on this paper and the six-point plan.

**Mr A K M Kibria Mazumdar (Bangladesh)**, asked whether AI can be an effective measure against cyber-attack?

**Ms Sarah Davies (UK)** responded that one of the case studies in her document concerns the use of deep fake technology which is certainly an AI risk. While not

expert in cyber security, she said her understanding from colleagues is that cyber attacks may have AI elements and therefore awareness and knowledge about AI is increasingly important for parliamentary cyber teams.

**Mr A K M Kibria Mazumdar (Bangladesh)** responded that Bangladesh is starting to use AI and that by 2024 it will shift to using AI technology in parliament.

**Ms Melissa English (Ireland)** asked whether the House of Commons uses any technology which is generative AI? In Ireland, they have produced a ‘bills digest’ using generative AI. It produces the document in a matter of seconds, where it would take a staff member hours.

**Ms Sarah Davies (UK)** said that colleagues in the House of Commons Library are looking for examples of where information can be synthesised, in a reasonably standard format, and produced rapidly. There are also versions of generative AI used by House of Commons select committees. Where inquiries receive large volumes of evidence it is used to produce a synthesis of the data and save staff time. She said the nature of data you feed into the software is critical for the value of the output. For example, where a staff member is blocked on a briefing topic, unsure where to begin, AI can provide a starting point or inspiration for a briefing document. She said the library are very careful to check the quality of any output from this process. She said generative AI can produce something which is superficially impressive but in reality the citations or evidence have been found to be incorrect. She concluded that we must balance the speed and time saving benefits of AI with the risk that the information provided is not correct.



#### **4. Communication by Dr Michael Schäfer, Secretary General of the German Bundestag, on ‘The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence’**

**Dr Michael Schäfer** presented the following communication:

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to add a few comments from the perspective of the German Bundestag to Dr Kleemann’s remarks.

International parliamentary strengthening has been a particularly important priority for us for many decades – since 1984, to be precise.

This special form of cooperation between parliamentary administrations has always been an important instrument for the mutual support and further development of us as parliaments.

It has gained considerably in importance and topicality once again in the recent past.

Democracy and parliamentarianism are facing multiple challenges. Authoritarian regimes, populism and disinformation are seeking to destroy the foundations of open and democratic societies. This makes it all the more important and urgent that we, as parliaments, join forces and work to mutually strengthen one another.

The German Bundestag is therefore determined to continue its international parliamentary strengthening efforts and to take an even more targeted approach.

In so doing, we especially want to support colleagues who are facing particularly great challenges.

As parliaments, we have a special responsibility here. It's true that the international promotion of democracy and parliamentarianism is often perceived as a task for the executive. But governments often have different approaches and set different priorities than parliamentary institutions themselves. I firmly believe that there is no substitute for direct exchange between parliaments.

In my view, we have relatively favourable starting conditions for international parliamentary strengthening, at least within the European Union.

As part of the Inter Pares programme that has already been mentioned, national parliaments from many EU countries are already cooperating effectively in the area of parliamentary strengthening.

We're not only pooling our resources within this framework but are also working to further develop the methodology of parliamentary strengthening. The IPU's Common Principles and the development of indicators for democratic parliaments also constitute important progress in this context.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done to expand and professionalise parliamentary strengthening. There is a huge need for support, and we could all do even more!

This applies, for example, to the digitalisation of our work, which has received an important boost thanks to the pandemic. We should build on this, for example by

developing hybrid long-term programmes. A combination of working visits and video conferences increases the intensity of the programmes, saves resources, and is a method that offers added value.

While parliamentary strengthening isn't rocket science, it does involve complex changes in terms of processes, institutional frameworks and mentalities and attitudes. It's precisely this – changing mindsets and attitudes, the mindset of all those involved – that we could and should pay more attention to.

Incidentally, I also believe that we should ensure that our programmes are focused even more on concrete results and outputs.

Activities should have a clearly defined objective.

This could be, for example, a new administrative organisation or amended rules of procedure.

But it's precisely for such concrete structural changes that we need the support of relevant and influential members of parliament – preferably in a non-partisan way, so that they endure after elections are held.

Not least for this reason, we regard it as best practice to involve not just the administration in parliamentary strengthening projects, but also the political level, by including members of parliament.

It goes without saying that this should take the form of a peer-to-peer approach, which – from the Bundestag's point of view – has proved its worth. An excellent example of this is our involvement in a project to strengthen a parliament in South Eastern Europe, which is being implemented by a partner organisation. A non-partisan steering body is closely involved in all steps in this process. The positive effects of this ownership are being felt across the board!

That said, I have found time and again that learning from one another is also a challenge. It requires a willingness to do so, both within one's own institution and within the partner parliaments, because this approach can only succeed if there is an open dialogue, with both sides being ready to talk about their own problems and solutions. This requires trust and a sensitive approach that takes cultural differences into account.

However, the success of parliamentary strengthening depends, to a large extent, on meticulous preparation.

In order to avoid misunderstandings and to be able to work in a targeted manner, it is vital to take a close look at the political system of the respective project partner.

Only if we understand the inner logic of a parliamentary system, the interplay between the different branches, the relationship between elected representatives and the administration, will we be able to assess which best practice examples may be transferable to our own system and which may not. This is fundamental to the success of peer-to-peer approaches.

By the way, regional projects can also prove to be particularly productive. They are, to my mind, a useful complement to bilateral projects. These projects not only increase the knowledge gained and the added value of the support provided, but they can also help to promote understanding and trust on a regional scale. All sides benefit from this: the individual partner parliaments, the links between them, and us as well, as the parliament providing support.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that only collegial cooperation between parliamentary administrations will enable us to effectively address the challenges that lie ahead of us.

Dialogue and exchange are not only essential for learning from each other, but also for promoting good practices and innovation. In a nutshell, cooperation between our administrations is a vital building block that helps us to convince our citizens of the benefits of parliamentarianism each day anew.

Thank you very much.

**Dr Michael Schäfer (Germany)** proposed that the discussion of this important topic continue within the Association and suggested a network of interested Secretaries Generals might be formed to consider the issue further in future.

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, thanked the member for their presentation and invited questions from the floor. He asked about the key risks of using AI in parliament and how these risks might impact parliamentary mechanisms.

**Dr Michael Schäfer (Germany)** said that the key risk is that legislative work is being done by machines. Elected members have a mandate and legitimation to work on legislation, people should know whether it is these elected members doing the work or machines.



## **5. Communication by Naim Çoban, Deputy Secretary-General of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, on 'The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence'**

**Mr Naim ÇOBAN** presented the following communication:

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) has always been an institution that maximizes the use of available technological resources and remains open to advancements in the field in an effort to enhance the quality of its services. As part of this commitment, it has launched initiatives to implement an artificial intelligence-supported application through the Minutes Information System and Photo Archiving Projects.

During the digital transformation process, duplicate transactions have been prevented by focusing on the singularity of data in the GNAT IT infrastructure. Additionally, other systems have been designed to work in an integrated structure alongside the main information systems.

### **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ENDEAVORS AS PART OF THE MINUTES INFORMATION SYSTEM**

During legislative activities, primarily at the Plenary Session of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, thanks to the implementation of Artificial Intelligence technology, meeting minutes will be:

- automatically drawn up with speech converted into text,
- managed,
- printed and published,
- archived which will facilitate transition to a paperless Parliament.

### **USES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

automatically identifying the speaker during meetings and transcribing their speech into written minutes, free from accent-related errors. The Project is aimed at generating minutes more rapidly, with increased accuracy, while also reducing paper consumption.

### **MINUTES INFORMATION SYSTEM APPLICATION STEPS**

Biometric data from Members of Parliament is collected during each election period and transferred to the system where it would be synchronized with each person's information, teaching the system how to operate. Biometric data which the system has learned previously through artificial intelligence is used for the «speaker recognition» function. The biometric data of both current and former MPs is stored in the system's database, ensuring that it can be used when MPs are re-elected. Over time, the system improves as more biometric data is transferred

and matched with people's information, thanks to artificial intelligence. This way, person recognition becomes more and more accurate.

The system continues to learn the spelling rules with each correction made to the speech content. The «speech recognition» function also gets better, allowing it to effectively transcribe audio.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ENDEAVORS AS PART OF THE PHOTO ARCHIVING SYSTEM

In response to requests from Members of Parliament, we will rapidly select their photographs from our extensive archives, which consist of millions of images. Using sophisticated artificial intelligence algorithms that allows for prompt and precise face recognition, this system ensures that faces of unidentified individuals in photographs, even in group pictures, are recognized, labeled and filed individually.

## IN CONCLUSION:

Our aim as the GNAT is to align ourselves with the rapidly evolving AI landscape and global trends in order to integrate the artificial intelligence technology into upcoming projects.

I would like to emphasize our willingness to collaborate with other parliaments in such endeavours.

**Mr Ahcène Djouaara (Algeria)**, asked what are the first measures which should be taken in our parliaments to benefit from these applications, whilst also protecting ourselves from the dangers?

**Mr Jose Pedro Montero (Uruguay)** asked who supplies and controls the information, after entering it into the system, is it the AI which then controls the information?

**Mr Naim ÇOBAN** said that in the first and second presentation both the opportunities and risks were presented and must be handled together. He said that digital development is essential and inevitable and so as secretaires general they must master it. Digitalisation is increasing in parliaments and ICT literacy needs to be increased. He said they all had to do their homework on cyber security. AI has its own challenges and there must be a list of procedures in place. He concluded that forming legal and ethical rules was very important, these rules need to be discussed and considered because there is currently a lot of room for improvement.

In response to Uruguay, he said they have an IT unit in the secretariat but they are outsourcing this data process. It is like a Research and Development project -

rather than ‘ready to use’ product – they have trialled and improved the products as it has developed. The minutes information system has stakeholders which are machines but the human factor cannot be ignored. The AI is very successful at converting words to text but where there are jokes or a noisy background environment the AI makes mistakes. Stenographers must monitor the process to prevent these mistakes.



*\*\*\* Session paused for a 10-minute coffee break \*\*\**



## **THEME: COOPERATION BETWEEN PARLIAMENTARY ADMINISTRATIONS**

### **6. Communication by Dr Georg Kleemann, Deputy Secretary General of the German Bundesrat, on ‘Stronger together. On cooperation between parliamentary administrations’**

**Dr Georg Kleemann** presented the following communication:

If, as is often said, parliaments are the engine room of democracy, then we as parliamentary administrations are the cogs in the wheel that keep the engine running. And like with every engine, it needs a little oil from time to time to ensure that the gears can continue to do their job reliably. And, to put it in more contemporary terms, every computer also needs an update from time to time. In our case, such an update lies in mutual exchange. The exchange of information, ideas and best practices to make our administrations fit for new challenges and to ensure that the members of our houses can do their work for the benefit of citizens.

For this reason, I also very much appreciate meeting in this round – the diverse insights, interesting discussions and instructive input. For our house, as I am sure is true for most of you, mutual exchange is only one aspect of several when it comes to the topic of “cooperation between parliamentary administrations”. Today I would like to share with you some thoughts on the topic of cooperation in the context of providing advice and support measures from the perspective of a relatively small administration in terms of numbers, and in doing so highlighting the different ways of using synergies in accordance with the motto of my intervention today, “stronger together”.

#### **1. Where and how we get involved**



At the beginning of every measure there is a request from a partner parliament, which may be addressed directly to us or to one of our partners with whom we cooperate in this area. Ideally, the request should already include specific ideas as to the areas and context in which the support shall to be provided.

When selecting the projects in which we get involved, we have to exercise a certain restraint simply because of our limited staff numbers – 200 people from the Secretary General to the doorman – in order to be able to live up to our aspiration of providing good quality advice. However, it is also important to us to show that good quality and efficient work can also be carried out by small administrations.

We focus our engagement primarily on projects that are aimed at advising other second chambers. This is where our greatest expertise lies. At the same time, however, we see ourselves – generally and independently of whether we are dealing with a first or second chamber – as a point of contact when it comes to questions of federalism or decentralisation.

Against the background of our limited staff resources, we welcome very much if our experts can concentrate on advising on the content, while the administrative implementation is carried out by third parties. In the past, we have had very positive experience in cooperating with INTER PARES, a European organisation that supports peer-to-peer parliamentary cooperation projects, or with German political foundations.

## 2. What is important to us

When we get involved in providing advice, two things are particularly important to us: on the one hand, cooperation on an equal footing and, on the other hand, the sustainability of our involvement.

Together with our partners, we want to develop customised solutions for the needs on the ground. We understand our procedures as a way of shaping parliamentary processes. But what works for us does not necessarily work for others. Therefore, with the help of our colleagues from the partner parliament, we depend on first developing an understanding of the local conditions, regulations and customs which can form the basis on which joint solutions can be developed that work for our partners. Peer-to-peer exchanges, i.e. the exchange of best practices among colleagues, can be a basis for real cooperation.

Sustainable involvement is typically not limited to one-off contributions, but develops over a longer period of time. Ideally, at the end of the process there will be a specific product. For example, in 2016 and 2017, together with colleagues from the German Bundestag and in cooperation with the Parliament in Myanmar, we set up a visitors' service in Myanmar and developed information leaflets for public relations work. Last year, in cooperation with the French Senate, we

developed recommendations for the drafting of bills and amendments with colleagues from the Côte d'Ivoire Senate. We will continue this work by running practical workshops in the near future. The use of video conferencing technology has made a lot of this easier as it allows us to follow and accompany the progress of such projects much more closely. And I would like to explicitly encourage colleagues who request such a measure to accept the offer to contact the partners even after completion of the official measure if there are any issues with the implementation or if there are still open questions, with a view to continuing the cooperation.

### 3. Lessons learned

The Corona pandemic has just shown us that many agreements, negotiations, talks and similar can also be successfully conducted at a distance via video link. However, we have also found that virtual encounters cannot completely replace real ones. Of course, this also applies to peer-to-peer advice. It thrives on the personal contact with the staff members who participate in the project and on the trust that is built up in the process. However, technology is a valuable addition, as constant on-site visits are not realistic in the course of a project and ongoing contact can be maintained via video link.

And this brings me to the next point: the provision of successful advice requires and costs time – on both sides. Staff members usually get involved in addition to their daily responsibilities. We therefore also have to make sure that we are mindful of our most valuable resources, our staff members. This means that a sufficient time budget must be taken into account in the planning of advisory projects.

Another aspect I would like to point out is the importance of coordination with other stakeholders. We can only achieve custom-made solutions if the advice is consistent not only for one chamber, but for the entire parliamentary body, for a country. For many issues, it would therefore make sense to work on a larger rather than on a smaller scale, for example, to provide advice to and from first and second chambers together.

Last but not least, with regard to our project in Myanmar, we had to learn the hard way that even the best planning and implementation are no guarantee for long-term success if the political circumstances change. Political stability is therefore an essential factor and the basis for the success of any advisory project – which, however, we cannot influence.

This should not, however, stop us from continuing to get involved where advice and cooperation are sought, where we can contribute to making the wheels of democracy run even more smoothly – both for our partners and for us in our

houses because, as a rule, we are stronger together when it comes to cooperation between parliamentary administrations.



## **7. Communication by Mr Albino de Azevedo Soares, Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal on 'Inter-parliamentary Cooperation between Portuguese speaking Parliaments'**

**Mr Albino de Azevedo Soares** presented the following communication:

Mr President,  
Distinguished Secretaries General,  
Dear colleagues,

The Assembleia da República of Portugal has a long history of inter parliamentary cooperation, dedicating a significant part of its resources to partnerships with parliaments and international organisations.

From Portugal's point of view, the idea behind participating in and promoting cooperation projects with other parliaments is to improve the exercise of parliamentary activity, both politically and administratively, based on the premise that the resilience of democratic processes and representative institutions is a guarantor of peace and development and that sharing experiences, in dialogue and partnership, contributes to consolidating the rule of law.

The idiosyncrasies of parliaments determine a unique range of challenges that cut across all institutions despite the differences between political and administrative models. In responding to these challenges, inter parliamentary cooperation is an excellent mechanism that contributes to the continuous improvement of internal processes, allowing innovative solutions to be found based on the experiences of other parliaments.

Within this framework, the Assembleia da República of Portugal has signed a number of memoranda of understanding with various parliaments and participated in multilateral cooperation projects promoted or funded by European institutions and international parliamentary organisations.

However, the cooperation between the Assembleia da República and Portuguese-speaking parliaments deserves to be highlighted here, not only because of its intensity and the results obtained but also because of its model, which has been

refined over the last few decades. This unique, structured and perfectly consolidated model of inter-parliamentary cooperation is not based on regional or political proximities but rather on the friendly, linguistic and cultural ties between their peoples, bringing together parliamentarians and parliamentary administrations located on four continents – Africa, Asia, Europe and South America.

This is the Portuguese experience that I wish to share, emphasising a curious aspect, given the theme and the country where this meeting is taking place. The first Portuguese parliamentary cooperation action, as we understand it, took place right here in Angola in 1987, 36 years ago, in a project promoted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Partnerships with Portuguese-speaking parliaments are established through the signing of cooperation protocols. These instruments define the ambition, the objectives and the areas to be developed. In other words, cooperation protocols are founding instruments of intent that define the form of cooperation, with a duration that is automatically renewed for equal and successive periods. The protocols have a distinctive feature: they are signed by the President of the Assembleia da República and his counterparts, which means that there is a decisive role in entering into the commitments to which they bind themselves.

They are comprehensive documents that provide a framework for exchanging experiences at the political and administrative level, reflecting the priorities identified in the dialogue between the Speakers of Parliament.

The first protocols were signed with Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe in 1995 and have since been signed with Mozambique in 1996, Guinea Bissau in 1997, Angola in 1998, and Timor-Leste in 2000. It should also be noted that the Assembleia da República signed a cooperation protocol with the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil this year.

Once the political commitment has been consolidated, it is up to parliamentary administrations to operationalise the partnership through the signing of a cooperation programme by the respective secretaries general. This document defines the logistical conditions to be provided by the parties, as well as the content and type of actions to be carried out.

As a rule, the programme safeguards the political dimension provided for in the cooperation protocol, establishing what kind of support the departments in each parliament are responsible for providing for initiatives by Members of Parliament that fall within this type of activity, such as mutual working visits or participation in seminars.

The technical and administrative aspect, aimed at the technical capacity building of parliamentary staff, tends to cover areas that cut across parliamentary activity: Legislative Procedure and Parliamentary Support, Official Journal and Audiovisual, Documentation, Archives and Legislative Information, Human Resources, Asset Management and Financial Management, Public Relations, Protocol and International Relations, and Information Technology.

As a rule, cooperation programmes last three years, with a scheduled mid term evaluation after a year and a half. The types of actions included in the programmes vary according to the interests and priorities agreed between the parties, although traineeships at the Assembleia da República, lasting two weeks, and seminars held in partner parliaments, lasting one week, are the most common models for sharing knowledge. Other modalities include technical assistance in matters related to information and communication technologies, the supply of documentation, books and publications of the Assembleia da República, as well as the reinforcement of computer equipment and software related to parliamentary activity.

The costs associated with the actions carried out within the scope of cooperation programmes tend to be shared between the Assembleia da República and the partner parliament. Each parliament pays for its officials' airfares and per diem allowances, as well as their life and travel insurance. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the host parliament to provide accommodation, local transportation and lunch for officials who are on working visits, as well as to provide all the information, documentation and other support material needed to carry out the training activities.

In addition to capacity-building and professional training activities carried out through mutual visits by parliamentary officials, the Assembleia da República, in collaboration with its partners, also promotes the placement of consultants in various Portuguese-speaking parliaments on a permanent basis.

This is the case in the National People's Assembly of Guinea-Bissau and the National Parliament of Timor-Leste, where two Portuguese lectrices work, and in the National Assembly of São Tomé and Príncipe, with the hiring of a consultant dedicated to the library and archive area.

Finally, as part of these partnerships, the Portuguese Parliament also seeks to involve academia, mobilising universities or external providers to develop tailor-made solutions.

The structure devised for these cooperation programmes also allows for the development of more complex projects. An example of this is the recent drafting of a guide to the functioning of parliamentary committees, prepared in partnership by the Departments of the Assembleia da República and the National People's

Assembly of Guinea-Bissau, with the support of the INTER PARES project. This exercise, which mobilised teams from both parliaments and was based on the Guinean Parliament's rules of procedure, details the legislative procedure, as well as the political oversight powers of parliamentary committees, with support to flows, minutes and examples of frequently produced documentation. A physical copy of this Guide was delivered to all the Members of Parliament in Guinea-Bissau last August at the start of the new legislature.

Together with the National Assembly of Cabo Verde, the design and implementation of a document management plan is currently underway. This project began in 2018 with the acquisition of an audiovisual archive system. Cabo Verdean and Portuguese technical officials contributed to the development of software capable of responding to the needs identified, which will allow the audiovisual collection of the Cabo Verdean Parliament to be made publicly available.

Another noteworthy project is the development of a collective catalogue of the libraries of Portuguese-speaking parliaments, which aims to implement a single piece of software (NYRON) to manage and support the different libraries of Portuguese-speaking parliaments. The technological solution, based in Lisbon, allows immediate consultation of the complete collection available in the various parliaments, as well as the possible sharing of works. The National Assembly of Angola, the National Assembly of Cabo Verde and the National Assembly of São Tomé and Príncipe were the first parliaments to join, and its implementation is underway in three more Portuguese speaking parliaments.

Cooperation between Portuguese-speaking parliaments also has a multilateral dimension through the Association of Secretaries General of Portuguese-speaking Parliaments (ASG-PLP), established on 30 January 1998.

At the annual meeting of this Association, the Secretaries General of Portuguese-speaking Parliaments draw up a plan of activities, which typically includes meetings of officials from specific areas (IT, international relations, library and archives), as well as thematic seminars and training courses.

As part of the activities promoted by the Association, the Assembleia da República of Portugal organises an annual inter-parliamentary training course for officials from all Portuguese-speaking parliaments – Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Timor-Leste. This two-week course usually has around 20 to 30 participants and aims to address the different dimensions of parliamentary administration under the umbrella of a broad and cross cutting theme. In 2023, the theme “21st-century parliaments” was chosen.

Before concluding, I would like to point out that what makes this whole exercise, protocols, programmes and actions possible is the human presence that deals daily with the reality and challenges that characterise parliamentary activity – the parliamentary staff. When it comes to parliamentary administrative management, there are no external experts who can share their expertise. With the knowledge they have acquired over years of service in their respective areas of specialisation, parliamentary officials are our best asset. This is evidenced by the volume of requests we receive, at European and global level, to make staff available to provide training abroad.

As secretaries general, we must balance making resources available for cooperation projects and ensuring that the Parliament's core activity is not impacted.

Nevertheless, I wish to leave you with the message that it is worth investing in the international dimension, particularly in cooperation between parliaments.

Portuguese parliamentary officials were the ones who were in Timor-Leste in 2002 to support the Constituent Assembly of that Parliament in partnership with their Timorese colleagues. They are Portuguese parliamentary officials who return from cooperation missions with fresh ideas, new solutions and proposals for improving their work.

I present you with the following challenge: if we have the knowledge, the officials, the structures and the instruments, we need to intensify inter parliamentary cooperation, not only as a traditional platform for sharing knowledge but also as a mechanism for incubating creative solutions, best practices and overcoming common challenges.

In this context, the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments could prove to be an excellent vehicle for promoting this type of activity.

Mr President, I leave you with this challenge.  
Thank you very much.



## **8. Communication by Mr Philippe Delivet, Director of International Affairs in the French Senate, on 'Cooperation between parliamentary administrations'**

**Mr Philippe Delivet** presented the following communication:

In the French Senate, cooperation between parliamentary administrations takes place in both a bilateral and multilateral framework, in accordance with the

“cooperation strategy” adopted by the executive of the Senate in March 2020.

## THE BILATERAL COOPERATION

- A) Cooperation agreements
- B) Exchanges of civil servants
- C) Hosting foreign delegations

### A) COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

- The Senate has signed 32 cooperation agreements with foreign parliamentary assemblies.
- In 2022 a declaration of intent was signed with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and a cooperation agreement with the Land of Saarland.
- In January 2023, a protocol agreement with the Ukrainian Rada was signed by the two General Secretaries.
- Of the 32 agreements, around ten were the subject of regular activities during 2022, such as talks, visits or on-site missions (for example on legislative procedure, control, communication or the evaluation of public policies).
- In parallel with the European twinning, hosting of 3 Quaestors of the Moroccan Chamber of Counselors.

### B) EXCHANGES OF CIVIL SERVANTS

- Exchange of civil servants within the framework of the Weimar format (the Polish Senate and the German Bundesrat).
- Exchange of civil servants under the administrative cooperation protocol between the Senate and the Saarland (Germany).
- Hosting of a Rada official for a week.

### C) HOSTING FOREIGN DELEGATIONS

- 17 cooperation initiatives in 2022, gathering 149 participants, including 11 members of parliament and 25 civil servants.
- Between January and October 2023, 17 delegations has been welcomed.

## THE MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

- A) European twinning with the Chamber of Councillors of the King of Morocco
- B) The International Short Programme on the organisation of parliamentary work (annual in French and every 2 years in English)
- C) Participation in the European Union's INTER PARES programme
- D) The DEMOCRACY SUPPORT NETWORK of the European Parliament
- E) Cooperation with the Asia Parliamentary Centre
- F) Interparliamentary assemblies

### A. EUROPEAN TWINNING WITH THE CHAMBER OF COUNCILLORS OF THE KING OF MOROCCO



- Twinning from May 2021 to March 2023
- The French Senate was the project leader, with the Italian Senate as junior partner, while the German Bundesrat, the Belgian Senate, the Polish Senate, the Romanian Senate and the Portuguese National Assembly also participated.
- In 2022: 18 activities, including 13 missions by Senate experts to Rabat, 4 steering committees, 1 mid-term seminar

#### B. THE INTERNATIONAL SHORT PROGRAMME ON THE ORGANISATION OF PARLIAMENTARY WORK (ANNUAL IN FRENCH AND EVERY 2 YEARS IN ENGLISH)

- Programme on the organisation of parliamentary work, organised jointly with the INSP and the National Assembly.
- The 27th edition, which took place from 14 to 25 November 2022, was attended by 21 participants, including 1 parliamentarian, 17 parliamentary officials, 1 official from a ministry and 2 from the private sector. The event brought together 14 countries.
- The working theme was "The path of the law, from drafting to evaluation", divided into some thirty working sessions.

#### C. PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION'S INTER PARES PROGRAMME

- The programme was launched by the European Commission and the Senate has responded to it, provided that the objectives are consistent with its parliamentary cooperation strategy and works with other parliamentary assemblies.
- The Senate of Côte d'Ivoire, the Parliament of Montenegro, the Parliament of Libya, the Parliament of Peru and the Senate of Chile have all benefited from this programme.
- The Senate continued these activities in 2023, in particular for the benefit of the Ivorian Senate.
- It has expressed an interest in working within the framework of INTER PARES with the Rada of Ukraine.

#### D. THE DEMOCRACY SUPPORT NETWORK OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

It is a network created on the initiative of the European Parliament. Bringing together officials from the Member States since 2020, the network promotes bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives undertaken by parliaments.

#### E. COOPERATION WITH THE ASIA PARLIAMENTARY CENTRE

- Memorandum of cooperation with the Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia, signed in 2019. It was extended to the 10 ASEAN countries in 2022 with the joint signing of a 3-year memorandum of understanding with the Asia Parliamentary Centre.

- A number of activities have been carried out in this context, including the presentation of the Senate's international activities and the sharing of experiences and concepts relating to parliamentary diplomacy.
- The French Senate attended a seminar in Cambodia in October 2022.
- The French Senate appoints a delegation to take part in various international parliamentary assemblies such as the IPU, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie, the Assembly for the Mediterranean, the Assembly for the Union of the Mediterranean and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
- The Senate is also an observer member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
- Some interparliamentary assemblies work on thematic issues. This is the case of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.
- In 2023, a French delegation took part in the 48th session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie.

#### F. INTERPARLIAMENTAR

- The French Senate appoints a delegation to take part in various international parliamentary assemblies such as the IPU, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie, the Assembly for the Mediterranean, the Assembly for the Union of the Mediterranean and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
- The Senate is also an observer member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
- Some interparliamentary assemblies work on thematic issues. This is the case of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.
- In 2023, a French delegation took part in the 48th session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie.

#### OTHER FORMS OF COOPERATION

- A) The activity of the Senate through interparliamentary friendship groups
- B) The interparliamentary dimension of protocol
- C) Decentralised cooperation

#### A. THE ACTIVITY OF THE SENATE THROUGH INTERPARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

Through its friendship groups, the Senate is very active internationally. The institution has 81 friendship groups and 4 information groups.

- In 2022, the friendship groups made 29 international trips and hosted 11 meetings.
- Since the beginning of 2023, the friendship groups have organised 57 events of all kinds in the Senate and 9 trips abroad by French delegations have already been organised.
- Friendship groups can act as vehicles for interparliamentary cooperation by identifying needs during dialogue with their counterparts.

## B. THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION OF PROTOCOL

The activities of the protocol can sometimes take on a dimension of cooperation between parliaments. For example, during the State visit of Charles III on 21 September 2023, His Majesty was accompanied by a delegation of British parliamentarians who met with their French counterparts who were members of the friendship group.

## C. DECENTRALISED COOPERATION

The Senate acts as an intermediary for the external action of local and regional authorities. The main actions undertaken are:

- Developing the Senate's role in providing information and promoting local initiatives.
- Organising events to promote the external action of local and regional authorities. For example, a round table was organised on 10 July 2023 on the theme of "French and Ukrainian local authorities facing the challenge of war in Ukraine".
- The organisation of conferences on decentralised cooperation with a specific country or region.



### **9. Communication by Mr Damien Cesselin, Secretary General of the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly, on 'Cooperation between parliamentary administrations'**

**Mr Damien Cesselin** presented the following communication:

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Secretaries General,

Dear Colleagues,

Cooperation between parliamentary administrations is one of the main activities of the institution whose administration I have the honour to manage: the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF, Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie). This activity absorbs more than a third of our budget and relies on the same proportion of the administrative team's time.

I can say with confidence that the APF has become a key player in interparliamentary cooperation throughout the French-speaking world, and that we are constantly promoting and deepening this cooperation, despite certain opposite trends.

Firstly, we are rowing against the tide of the increasing attacks on democracy, with the growing success of populist parties, the public's mistrust of representative institutions, the expansion of executive powers to the detriment of parliaments and the succession of recent coups d'état, which have systematically led to the dissolution of elected parliaments – incidentally not only in the Francophonie.

Secondly, there are new trends that run counter to the international openness of parliaments: refocusing of elected representatives on the internal workings of their assemblies, socio-economic crises that lead elected representatives to be more concerned with the needs of their constituents and even, in some countries, rejection of international cooperation co-managed with La Francophonie.

Interparliamentary cooperation remains essential, with a view to affirming the universality of democratic principles, strengthening the rule of law and ensuring respect for human rights. These three objectives are one of the APF's guiding principles, not only in terms of the letter of its statutes but also in the spirit of the tradition with which it has gradually endowed itself. I would remind you that when the APF was founded in 1967, this was not self-evident at a time of decolonisation: the institutions that were emerging to promote the Francophonie were limited to a purely linguistic and cultural role as the more political issues still seemed too delicate to tackle.

The APF was a pioneer and ahead of its time in taking political action. This is what Victor Bodson, President of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies, had to say when he hosted the founding meeting of the APF: "We have no other political objective than to ensure and develop our freedoms, and at the same time parliamentary democracy, which for some countries is a centuries-old tradition, while many of the young nations represented here have only recently acquired their national independence and full democratic freedoms."

The APF always used a single lever to achieve these objectives: the traditional lever of debate, an exercise in which our parliamentary assemblies are largely accustomed, these political discussions between elected representatives which encourage the exchange of information, the confrontation of opinions and the adoption of positions likely to influence governments to take action.

It was not until the early 1990s that the APF dared to mobilise another, more innovative lever, by setting up our first parliamentary cooperation programs. These

programs were quickly structured around three categories: disseminating the French language; strengthening the technical and legal capacities of parliamentarians; and training civil servants. We could mention a fourth category, which appeared in the 2000s and which the APF is developing more and more: youth programs, which make it possible to raise awareness of parliaments and the merits of the democratic system among younger generations, such as the *Parlement francophone des jeunes*, a French-speaking Youth Parliament.

To carry out all these programs, the APF relies mainly on a grant from the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (the OIF). In recent years, it has also been able to count on earmarked funding from other French-speaking donors such as Wallonie-Bruxelles International and the Agence française de développement. Thanks to the trust of these donors, the APF is able to offer an annual cooperation program worth between 700 000 and 800 000 euros per year.

Other organizations provide technical support to the APF for its cooperation program, including Senghor University in Alexandria, the Asian Parliamentary Centre, the French National Institute of Public Service, Laval University in Quebec, the Parliamentary Studies Research Chair at the University of Luxembourg and, on an ad hoc basis, United Nations bodies such as UN-Women, UNDP and UNICEF. The Association of Secretaries General of French-speaking Parliaments, or ASGPF, the French-speaking counterpart of the ASGP, provides invaluable support to the APF by identifying trainers for training courses for parliamentary officials.

Actions for the benefit of civil servants are playing an increasing role in our cooperation programs, with a wide range of offerings.

The oldest category is the very high-level annual training course leading to certification that the French Parliament co-organises with the INSP (the former French ENA), the International Short Program on the organization of parliamentary work. The APF supports this by awarding scholarships to a dozen officials from its member parliaments, selected on the basis of applications. We will soon be closing the period for applications: staff from French-speaking parliaments can still apply.

The APF also supports other training courses organised by parliaments in the North, which are open to all French-speaking civil servants, such as the International Parliamentary Training Program organised by the National Assembly of Quebec and Laval University, which also involves the Senegalese National Assembly; or the training seminar co-organised by the Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg.

The APF also works with Senghor University to provide in-house training courses on specific topics at the request of parliaments. Twice a year, it enables around fifty officials from a parliament, generally an African parliament, to benefit from a week of training given by senior officials from the ASGPF. This initiative has been named the "Geoffrey-Dieudonné" training course, in tribute to an administrator from the Wallonia-Brussels Parliament who was a victim of a terrorist attack in Bamako almost eight years ago, while taking part in such a training course in Mali.

In partnership with the OIF, a new certification course with the Université Senghor was also launched this year. Organised online, it will enable around ten civil servants to improve their skills in designing public policies in favour of gender equality.

Lastly, every year the APF hosts one or two senior officials from French-speaking parliaments for two months of immersive training with the team in Paris.

This wide range of internships, which are invaluable both for the APF and for the beneficiaries, reinforce the density of interparliamentary relations: this experience enables the interns to forge lasting links with correspondents of the 92 parliaments represented in our Assembly. Once they return to their own parliament, they become loyal allies of the APF for the rest of their career.

What's more, in addition to these actions carried out specifically for civil servants, our cooperation programs for parliamentarians also benefit civil servants. Indeed, many of them systematically take part in the seminars and workshops organised for the deputies and senators of our parliaments.

Overall, during the financial year that is soon ending, actions specifically aimed at civil servants represent a commitment of almost 130,000 euros. And more than 200 parliamentary officials have benefited from our programs on all five continents. Allow me to emphasize the APF's global reach : as well as having taken action on the ground in French-speaking African parliaments that are traditionally at the

heart of the Francophonie, such as those in Niger and Chad, it has enabled civil servants further to the periphery of the traditional Francophonie to access these training opportunities. Take, for example, an official from the Parliament of Vanuatu, for whom we provided training in Paris, or the head of a committee in the Cambodian Senate, for whom the effort was twofold since French was not her first language.

This was also the case for many civil servants from Central and Eastern Europe, where people tend to think that English or German have completely supplanted French. Yet we had a very rich and high-quality participation from senior civil servants from countries such as Albania, Armenia, Georgia, and Montenegro. We must pay tribute to them for carrying out these training courses entirely in French. This convinces us that we should continue to offer these programs, which maintain the appeal of the French language and prove the usefulness for this audience of having invested in learning French.

I would like to stress another positive aspect of these actions for civil servants: they enable us to maintain a link with parliaments in transition. According to our Statutes, we must cease our cooperation programs with parliaments in countries where constitutional order has broken down. Unfortunately, this situation has multiplied in recent years, and we now have 9 suspended parliaments, 7 of which are in Africa.

However, considering that parliamentary administrations are not to be held responsible for these political situations and that they are regularly maintained after periods of transition, the APF wants to be pragmatic and continue to offer its support to the administrations of suspended parliaments.

This is particularly the case for the Chadian National Council, which remains enthusiastic about the Francophonie in parliament and has benefited from training in N'Djamena, an immersion course and a grant for the high-level program on the organization of parliamentary work, held in Paris.

We work also with the OIF to support the administration of the Transitional Legislative Assembly in Burkina Faso with a view to a return to constitutional order. And we have every hope of maintaining our cooperation with the officials of Gabon's Transitional National Assembly and Senate, following the coup d'état at the end of August.

I will now turn to our prospects for interparliamentary cooperation. While the APF is keen to release the resources needed to continue its traditional programs, it is also seeking to innovate in order to adapt to the new demands of its members. This is why last year it came up with a new concept: legislative corpuses.

The idea arose following the adoption of two framework laws a few years ago, on the one hand on the compulsory registration of children at the civil registry office and, on the other, on the protection of personal data. In 2022, our political authorities decided to introduce new legislative material in a more operational and educational format that could be replicated in the various APF member parliaments.

By pooling their expertise, the aim is to use existing legislation as a basis for reference. The resources thus proposed can then be adapted according to the needs of the parliaments, taking into account their specific national characteristics. Conversely, our members may also find it useful to enhance their own legislative arsenal by sharing it.

Each legislative corpus will focus on emblematic, practical measures that parliamentarians can use to legislate or better control government action. It will bring together turnkey technical elements that parliamentary officials can use to support the implementation of these measures in their parliaments.

An initial draft legislative corpus, relating to the implementation of the Paris climate agreement in the French-speaking world, has been launched with the help of the OIF and its Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable (IFDD) (in English, the Francophone Institute for sustainable development). The project will be completed next January. We have already collected a wide range of best practice measures implemented by national parliaments, as well as sub-national parliaments such as the provincial government of Quebec. Starting next year, these measures will then be promoted to parliaments that request them.

After the fight against climate change, a second project has been launched on whistleblowers, and others will soon be launched on the fight against plastic waste, the value enhancement of natural resources, and non-profit associations.

This new type of cooperative action will have the advantage of providing both political and administrative solutions, with no illusory attempt to harmonise



legislation throughout the French-speaking world, but with a view to finding ways of converging. The legislative corpuses will eventually form the basis of the seminars we offer to parliamentarians.

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, thanked all members for their presentations and noted the importance of the exchange of ideas which occurs in the Association.



## **10. Concluding remarks**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President** thanked all members for participating in a full and interesting debate and invited them to return for the next day's session from 10.00am. He closed the sitting.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 5 PM.

# THIRD SITTING

Wednesday 25 October 2023 (morning)

Mr Najib El Khadi, President, in the Chair

---

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 10.15AM

## 1. Introductory remarks

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, invited members to take their seats and welcomed them back to the meeting.

He informed members about a request for partnership received by the ASGP from a team of parliamentary researchers who are holding a conference on the theme ‘Parliament and time.’ The Executive Committee decided that information about the event and project would be diffused amongst the ASGP membership, enabling all Secretaries General to decide independently if they would like to support or participate in the events, bilaterally.

## 2. Members

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, asked members to welcome the following new member of the Association, who had been put before the Executive Committee and agreed to:

**Mr Mohamed Abdullahi ABDI**

Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies,  
Somalia

The new Member was accepted.

## 3. Orders of the Day

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President** informed members that the Executive Committee had accepted a new communication from East Timor on ‘Promoting transparency and accountability through better institutional communication’ and, at his request, agreed to delay the presentation of Mr Mahmoud Etman.

The Orders of the Day were *accepted*.



**THEME: PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH BETTER  
INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION IN PARLIAMENTS**

**4. Communication: Mr Rui Pereira Costa, Deputy Secretary General of the  
Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, on 'Communicating Parliament: new  
challenges in the digital age'**

**Mr Rui Pereira Costa** presented the following communication:

Mr President,  
Distinguished Secretaries General,  
Dear colleagues,

Never before have parliaments had at their disposal a wide range of tools that allow them to communicate simultaneously with such a large number of citizens, something that was unthinkable a few decades ago. However, these capabilities imply a set of new challenges that need to be overcome with particular urgency.

Today, the channels available to criticise the parliamentary institution are multiple, easily accessible, free and without any particular filter. Satire, condemnation or even insults against members of bodies that exercise sovereign power or the parliamentary institution itself are common on social media or in comments in digital newspapers. While this reality has always existed, new technologies have amplified these messages, enhancing the damage to institutional credibility and creating noise with regard to the messages that are important to convey.

In Portugal's case, the Parliament's exposure to criticism is the result of its own policy of transparency. The Institution is scrutinised by society because it makes all public information available on its main digital platforms, the Internet portal and ARTV/Parliament Channel (a dedicated television channel with 24-hour programming that mainly broadcasts plenary sittings and committee meetings) and because it opens its doors to journalists and citizens.

At the same time, parliamentary activity can be followed live, searched in a structured manner in the various databases or processed for other platforms using open data sets and series made available on the Internet portal. One of the objectives of the transparency policy is certainly to give visibility to the Institution

and expose it to scrutiny. However, to a certain extent, the result achieved reinforces the traditional negative image of the Institution. On the one hand, by exposing political actors, whose behaviour can be more easily scrutinised through the various digital platforms.

However, this is strictly a political issue and not a communication issue. When defining transparency policies, it was agreed that it is the Parliament's responsibility to provide raw information on all public matters, such as, for example, Members' absences. On the other hand, the appetite for the anecdotal overtakes parliamentary content, and we all have countless instances of anecdotal episodes that we can share, which, at one time or another, fill the pages of newspapers or make the news on television, or go viral, as we say today, on social media.

What is certain is that opening up parliaments to the media and citizens, as well as making all public information available, does not seem to be enough to project the Institution's image in a positive light. The Parliament itself must communicate. The Parliament's communication strategy cannot, of course, be based on the principle of "giving the people what they want", but it cannot forget them when trying to communicate the parliamentary institution in all its complexity. Firstly, because the Parliament's reality is complex and not everything can be simplified, otherwise it will be trivialised and mischaracterised. Secondly, because people are numerous and very different, and the Parliament must take that diversity into account. The Parliament must communicate in order to project the image of a plural and transparent institution, scrutinised by society and close to voters, raising awareness of this body that exercises sovereign power and of its activities and promoting citizen participation.

In this context, the Portuguese Parliament, in addition to establishing transparency towards citizens as a structuring policy, has sought to stabilise the different tools at its disposal for making information available.

These include the Internet portal, the Parliament Channel, social media pages, a monthly newsletter, information sent by email (press releases, invitations to events), newspaper and television advertisements (contributions to initiatives under public discussion, cultural activities) and, of course, face-to-face or telephone contacts.

While the Official Journal was, for all parliaments, the means of communicating parliamentary activity par excellence, from the 1990s onwards, the transition to the digital age introduced new ways of communicating. The computerisation of services and the creation of databases made it possible to integrate and structure parliamentary information, and the Official Journal became the subject of exhaustive document processing, using cataloguing and indexing tools.

In the Portuguese case, the first website of the *Assembleia da República* was launched in 1996, with predominantly static content. Since then, the Parliament's portal has been restructured several times, progressively incorporating new content and features for civic participation, such as the possibility of sending contributions to the discussion on the details of legislative initiatives, the creation of citizen participation platforms for submitting and collecting signatures for petitions, legislative initiatives by citizens and citizens' referendum initiatives, as well as the creation of a suggestion box.

Since 2006, the Plenary has been broadcast on its dedicated free-to-air channel. Later, in 2015, a new Parliament Channel Web TV platform was implemented, which, among other features, allows the selection of the live broadcast one wishes to watch if several meetings are taking place simultaneously.

Today, the Parliament Channel brings more than 3 000 hours of live parliamentary proceedings to every corner of the world, allowing viewers to choose between 12 simultaneous broadcasts and providing all Portuguese television channels with the images that make the daily news.

Dear colleagues,

With the development of these platforms, it has become increasingly urgent to select the type of content that the Parliament should make available. In order to clarify this, the Working Group on the Digital Parliament was set up, with representatives from all the parliamentary groups and with the involvement of the parliamentary departments, with the aim of harnessing the potential of new technologies to strengthen the relationship between citizens and the *Assembleia da República*, having worked on all the relevant areas with regard to the Parliament's digital transformation and communication.

In addition to its presence on social media, the Parliament also produces content with the aim of informing, but also explaining and including citizens in the political debate. This is determined by the institutional communication guidelines while respecting the rules of impartiality, rigour and fairness in the representation of parliamentary political forces.

Dear colleagues,

Digital communication certainly does not bridge the gap between citizens and the Institution. The distance between citizens and the Institution is justified to some extent by distrust of politics and its actors and, certainly, also by a lack of interest in the issues covered.

The main reasons for this development in the lack of identification between citizens and politicians have long been identified: the hermetic nature of parties, the bureaucratic functioning of bodies that exercise sovereign power, the opacity of decision-making processes, the lack of identification between individual objectives

and collective interests, sometimes inappropriate behaviour on the part of public and political agents and, increasingly, the state of disinformation in which we live all contribute to a progressive distancing between voters and elected representatives, which translates into alarming levels of abstention.

One of the ways of reversing this trend must be to communicate effectively what the institutions do on behalf of citizens, in other words, to inform society in a rigorous, complete and, where possible, appealing way, without being afraid to admit fault or to clearly emphasise the benefits of parliamentary activity for that same society.

This endeavour takes on new urgency in the face of the growing spread of disinformation affecting the entire public arena, including parliamentary communication.

We all feel the difficulty of getting a message across in the swampy, shifting terrain of disinformation, no longer made up of agents and rules known and accepted by all, but rather of the myriad sources of information that we all are, adding or subtracting aspects to each story and consciously or unconsciously spreading “facts” that condition reality, even though they are often unrelated to it.

Dear colleagues,

Today, parliamentary information cannot be limited to making open and transparent data universally available. In a society where the truth is, as we have seen, atomised, it has to be rigorous and coherent but, at the same time, active and effective. In other words, it is important to reach out to citizens outside the parliamentary context, providing relevant and intelligible information. Making parliamentary proceedings available live and on various platforms, allowing the consultation of documentation supporting meetings, and constantly publishing studies, reports and opinions will not do much good if it is not accompanied by tools that allow voters to contact the Parliament and always receive a response.

And in this ongoing process of adapting to the digital age, it is up to parliamentary departments to promote an internal culture centred on permanent innovation. In this context, I would like to highlight an ongoing project related to the use of artificial intelligence to automatically enhance the relationship between content, which is sometimes dispersed, in order to be able to offer the maximum amount of information as a result of each search.

I will conclude by saying the following: the official communication carried out by parliaments, as transparent and unedited as it can be, must, therefore, be concerned with taking the Parliament out into society while still bringing society in.

- I would, therefore, say that the Parliament's official message must fulfil four fundamental criteria, among others:
- It must be focused and point in the same direction, regardless of the parliamentary body conveying it or the means of communication through which it is conveyed;
- It must be transparent because it is the fastest way to legitimise the power democratically conferred by citizens on their representatives;
- It must be rigorous, since no communication is effective if it is approximate, partial or truncated and, therefore, discreditable; and
- It must be prompt, since the time it takes to communicate often affects its veracity.

This is what we endeavour to do in the Portuguese Parliament, and we are fully committed to doing so. Thank you very much for your time.

**Ms Sarah Davies (UK)** asked whether he had any reflections on the difference between communication and public engagement. Do parliaments need to approach these two elements separately or as part of the same process?

**Mr Rui Pereira Costa** said that they have online platforms and websites that allow citizens to submit petitions which require 60,000 signatures. These are initiatives addressed directly to parliament. In Portugal, they also enable visits to the parliament and provide activities and information. These visits receive excellent feedback. Another initiative is the youth parliament which every year encourages thousands of secondary students to participate in parliamentary sessions.

**Mr Naim ÇOBAN (Türkiye)** asked whether there were any examples of public relations with parliament being difficult, he said citizens can have a very intense relationship with parliament which can result in heavy criticism and even defamation of elected members. Criticism is welcome and expected but defamation is unacceptable. He enquired how Portugal maintains standards while also encouraging engagement?

**Mr Rui Pereira Costa** said that criticism is constant and the media has serious responsibilities in this regard. He said providing timely and transparent information to the public is crucial and declared that parliament is the most transparent institution in Portugal. The names of its members, their salaries, papers and debates are all published. However, he noted it can still be difficult to convey to the public what has been done in parliament. People often think politicians do nothing, but this is completely false. However, it means parliaments have failed to convey the work that is done in parliament to our citizens.

**Mr Armand Palm (Burkino Faso)**, asked, when the population participates in law making, how the technical service manage and process the citizens' data? Is this provided to the members of parliament in its raw form or handled before?

**Mr Rui Pereira Costa** responded that for citizens initiatives, there is an online platform where citizens complete a online form, the information is then processed and sent to the secretariat. The secretariat only accept proposals which are within the rules, these proposals are then voted and debated within the committees.



#### **4. Communication: Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Thailand on 'Building an open Parliament: fostering transparency and accountability'**

**Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk** presented the following communication:

This communication explores the imperative of an open parliament in the context of the House of Representatives of Thailand. It studies the vision of a SMART Parliament, the strategy of a Digital Parliament, and activities aimed at creating an Open Parliament. The communication also examines how these initiatives align with international standards on Open Parliament and the communication channels within the Thai Parliament. The ultimate goal is to foster transparency, accountability, and inclusivity within parliamentary governance, making it more accessible and responsive to the needs of citizens.

##### Introduction

In the age of digital transformation and increased citizen participation, the concept of an “Open Parliament” has gained prominence worldwide. An Open Parliament is one that is transparent, accountable, and actively engages with its citizens. In the context of the House of Representatives of Thailand, this communication explores the vision, strategy, and activities aimed at building such an open and accountable parliamentary system.

##### International Standards on Open Parliament

The global community endorses Open Parliament initiatives, guided by the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness. This framework, launched at the World e-Parliament Conference in 2012, calls for transparent, inclusive, and accessible parliamentary systems. The Declaration emphasizes four key areas:

- 1) Promoting Openness: Foster citizen engagement and ensure access to parliamentary data with limited legal restrictions.



- 2) Enhancing Transparency: Regularly publish various parliamentary information, promoting accountability.
- 3) Ensuring Access: Make parliamentary information easily accessible through diverse channels, including media and online platforms.
- 4) Facilitating Electronic Communication: Provide structured online data and user-friendly websites, ensuring engagement while prioritizing privacy.

#### SMART Parliament - A Vision for Efficiency

Since 2020, “SMART Parliament” has become the vision of the Secretariat of the House of Representatives that paves the way forward for achieving higher capacity and performance, transforms the Secretariat into a Digital Parliament with transparency, and supports the work of the legislative institution to be effective and beneficial to the people. This is where our vision of a SMART Parliament assumes significance:

- **S for Sophisticated:** To have the skills, knowledge, and expertise of a professional in legislative work with high performance and capability in responding to changes
- **M for Moral & Ethics:** To adhere to morality and ethics, uphold good core values and culture, and promote happiness in the workplace
- **A for Accountability & Transparency:** To have good governance, take into consideration risk management, social impact, and efficiency, and adhere to transparency and accountability.
- **R for Resilient & Competitive:** To have the capability to respond to changes and competitive advantage through a people-centric approach, and build partnerships with all sectors both domestic and international
- **T for Technology & Digital Transformation:** To be a Digital Parliament with creativity and leverage on digital technology, innovation, information, and human capital

The vision of SMART Parliament aligns with the overarching goal of enhanced parliamentary performance. It is used as internal communication to raise awareness and enhance the knowledge of parliamentary staff on the vision of SMART Parliament, as well as strengthen the participation and teamwork among officers. The vision of SMART Parliament also focuses on publicizing the Secretariat's excellence. In September 2023, we have an event called SMART Parliament Week where best practices on public services are shared through talk shows, virtual exhibitions, and special lectures.

#### Digital Parliament - A Strategy for Transformation

In our pursuit of an open parliamentary system, the Plan for Digital Parliament 2023-2027 takes center stage. This forward-looking approach represents a fundamental shift in how we operate and engage with citizens.

A Digital Parliament Plan is not merely a response to the demands of the digital age; it is a strategic transformation that aligns with our vision for a SMART Parliament. Before the current plan, we adopted the first 5-year Digital Parliament Plan in 2018, which is now developed into the new plan with “Enterprise Architecture” as a tool for the Bureau of Information Technology, both in the House of Representatives and the Senate, for their management and maintenance of digital and IT infrastructure. The Plan for Digital Parliament 2023-2027 covers 5 areas as follows;

**1) Advanced Intelligence Parliament:** This focuses on the development of information systems and the development of a central parliamentary platform to facilitate convenient, complete, and seamless operations between offices.

**2) Data-Driven Organization:** This area consists of 3 main plans including the Data Exchange Standard, the Big Data Platform, and the Intelligent Decision Support System.

**3) Digital Participation and Engagement Innovation:** The goal is to develop a transparent mechanism for collecting information, hearing the people's voices, and gathering opinions and votes from all stakeholders, as well as to create a digital communication mechanism bonding democratic networks and alliances in the digital society context.

**4) Digital Development and Sustainability:** This area aims for the development of digital infrastructure to support tailored technology, the establishment of security and safety measures to ensure confidence in the parliamentary process and prevent threats, and the implementation of a flexible "Work Anywhere Platform" to accommodate diverse operational contexts and to facilitate access for all user groups.

**5) Digital Culture:** Encompassing personnel development and the transition of manpower towards a digital parliament, along with guidelines for enhancing the organizational management structure. This includes the Digital Skills Support Plan, aligned with the Secretariat's digital skills development strategy.

The strategy of a Digital Parliament is not just about embracing technology; it is about transforming our parliamentary system to better serve and engage with our citizens. It's about creating a government that is efficient, accessible, and actively involves its people in the democratic dialogue. As we work to build a SMART, Digital, and Open Parliament, the strategy of a Digital Parliament remains instrumental in achieving these goals.

## Communication Channels within the House of Representatives of Thailand

In our quest to build an open and accountable parliament, effective communication is a cornerstone of our strategy. To this end, the House of Representatives of Thailand has established several dedicated channels to bridge the gap between the parliament and the citizens.

- 1) **Thai Parliament Radio:** Thai Parliament Radio serves as a vital channel for disseminating information about parliamentary proceedings and discussions. This dedicated radio station ensures that citizens have access to live coverage of parliamentary sessions and debates. It provides a direct window into the heart of our legislative process, allowing people from all walks of life to tune in and stay informed about the issues that matter most to them.
- 2) **Thai Parliament TV:** Thai Parliament TV is another essential component of our communication strategy. This dedicated television channel offers comprehensive coverage of parliamentary activities, enabling citizens to witness debates, discussions, and legislative decisions firsthand. It brings our parliamentary processes into the living rooms of every household, offering unprecedented accessibility.
- 3) **Social Media Platforms:** In the age of digital connectivity, social media platforms have become powerful tools for communication and engagement. The House of Representatives of Thailand maintains an active presence on various social media channels, such as Facebook, X (or Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. It offers citizens an immediate connection to parliamentary activities and the opportunity to engage in discussions on a wide range of topics.

As we strive to build a SMART, Digital, and Open Parliament, these communication channels are pivotal in ensuring that citizens remain at the heart of our democratic process. Open communication is the bridge that connects government to people, and it is the key to forging a stronger, more responsive democracy.

### Activities for an Open Parliament

In our endeavour to build an Open Parliament that fosters transparency and accountability, we have embarked on a series of concrete activities designed to actively involve citizens in the parliamentary process.

#### 1) Data Curation to Open Parliament

One of the cornerstone activities for an Open Parliament is our commitment to data curation. In March 2023, the Secretariat organized a seminar on "Data Curation to Open Parliament" to ensure that parliamentary data is curated, accessible, and comprehensible. This initiative focuses on ensuring that parliamentary data is not just accessible but also preservable with long-term accessibility and reusability. Data curation involves simplifying this information, presenting it in a way that is user-friendly, and making it readily available to citizens.

## 2) Youth and Innovation for Open Parliament

In June 2023, the Secretariat also nurtured young talent and innovative ideas through a project on "Youth and Innovation for Open Parliament", promoting the active participation of young citizens in shaping the future of parliamentary governance. We welcomed fresh perspectives and creative solutions to challenges, ensuring our parliament remains dynamic and adaptable to evolving needs by fostering an environment of innovation within the parliamentary sphere. In this project, we bridged generational gaps by encouraging young citizens to participate in decision-making processes and seek to integrate their ideas, concerns, and aspirations into our policies and actions.

These activities collectively make our Open Parliament more dynamic, accessible, and inclusive. They empower citizens to play an active role in shaping the legislative agenda, holding their representatives accountable, and contributing to the development of a more vibrant democracy.

## Leadership's Role in Promoting an Open Parliament

In alignment with our commitment to fostering transparency and accountability, the First Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Mr. Padipat Suntiphada, has initiated an ambitious endeavor to build an open database from the House, ensuring accessibility and comprehensibility for all, consisting of 2 phases.

**Phase 1:** This phase involves creating a user-friendly database encompassing member details, updated vote results, and tracking of parliamentary bills. Additionally, we aim to enhance the transparency of House committee meetings and streamline the functionality of the Parliamentary Budget Office website, facilitating easy access to public hearings.

**Phase 2:** This stage focuses on incorporating face recognition technology for precise parliamentary voting records. Furthermore, we plan to publish comprehensive Hansard and official reports, along with Stenographic reports and video clips of parliamentary questions and answers, to ensure comprehensive access to parliamentary proceedings.

### Challenges on the Path to an Open Parliament

Our vision for an Open Parliament is an ambitious one, aimed at fostering transparency and accountability in our legislative processes. While we are resolute in our commitment to this cause, we recognize that the journey is not without its challenges.

One of the prominent challenges we face is the difficulty in ensuring the accessibility of crucial information to all citizens. The vast array of data and documents generated in parliamentary proceedings can sometimes be overwhelming and scattered across various platforms.

Furthermore, the structure of our website can at times be seen as unsystematic, making it less user-friendly than we would desire. In the digital age, where information is at our fingertips, it's vital that our websites are organized in a way that makes information easy to find, understand, and utilize.

Additionally, there is room for improvement in making our information machine-readable. We understand that machine-readable data is crucial for efficient data analysis and automation, and it's an area where we aim to progress further.

These challenges are significant, but we firmly believe that they are not insurmountable. We see them as opportunities for growth and development, and we remain committed to addressing these issues to make our parliamentary system even more open and accessible to our citizens.

### Conclusion and Call for Input

In conclusion, the vision of a SMART Parliament, the strategy of a Digital Parliament, and the activities for an Open Parliament collectively aim to transform the House of Representatives of Thailand into a model of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. This paradigm shift is a response to the evolving needs and expectations of citizens in an increasingly connected world. It signifies a commitment to making parliamentary governance more accessible, responsive, and accountable to the people it serves. Building an open parliament is not just a vision; it is a call to action to redefine democracy for the digital age.

We invite ASGP members to share their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions on how we can overcome these challenges and make our parliamentary system more open and accountable. All input is invaluable in helping us refine and strengthen our commitment to an Open Parliament.

**Mr Mahmoud Etman (Egypt)** wished to know if the development of channels for disseminating parliamentary activity has enabled citizens to formulate requests of a legislative nature.

**Mr Naim ÇOBAN (Türkiye)** asked what challenges the Thai parliament faced in delivering this project, what the role of the Secretary General was in the process and how the process was managed between the elected members and the secretariat?

**Ms Sarah Davies (UK)** asked about the slide on organising data and in particular the risk of having large volumes of data scattered across the system. A challenge in the UK is managing internal data. Procedural staff tend to keep records in their personal emails rather than in shared documents which makes understanding the decision making process difficult. She asked whether Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk had made any progress with this issue?

**Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk (Thailand)** responded that there is too much information, it can be overwhelming, there is information flowing from email, tv and radio. In Thailand, they use radio to contact people in far off provinces and use the television to communicate to other audiences. For younger generations they use social media. However, because there is information on all channels it is hard to keep track. On the young generation project, she said they are putting more effort into youth engagement. New MPs, around 30 to 40%, are very active and what to change things and do new things. The idea for the open parliament has come from this group in parliament.



## **5. Communication: Mr George Xolile, Secretary to the Parliament of South Africa, on 'Strengthening parliamentary oversight and accountability: recommendations of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into allegations of State Capture in the Public Sector'**

**Mr George Xolile** presented the following communication:

South Africa became a democracy almost three decades ago when it adopted the final Constitution (1996)<sup>1</sup>. Over this period, Parliament has developed its procedures and practices including those associated with oversight and accountability over the executive. These steps have been taken incrementally but

---

<sup>1</sup> Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996).

also in response to setbacks and seminal moments. The paper will examine progress with Parliament's oversight work and reflect on the strategic orientation and future of the institution. As a case study, the paper will focus on how Parliament has confronted corruption and specifically the experience of "state capture".

The South African Constitution introduced an accountable and transparent State as well as a system of checks and balances to safeguard against the abuse of power. As one arm of the State, the legislature is elected by the people to represent their interests, pass legislation and oversee executive action. Parliament consists of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. The National Assembly is elected by proportional representation and mandated to represent the people directly, whereas the National Council of Provinces is comprised of delegations from each of the nine provinces.

From the inception of democracy, Parliament was concerned with transforming the legal framework to align statute with the Constitution. These included, *inter alia*, laws to empower members, to regulate the public service and state finances, and to consolidate other independent institutions supporting democracy (the so-called Chapter Nine Institutions).<sup>2</sup> Parliament also overhauled its own rules – the National Assembly in 2016 and the National Council of Provinces in 2021. The Joint Rules of Parliament are currently being reviewed. As the legal system was transformed, however, Parliament shifted its focus to its other functions including oversight over the Executive and commissioned various studies to this end.

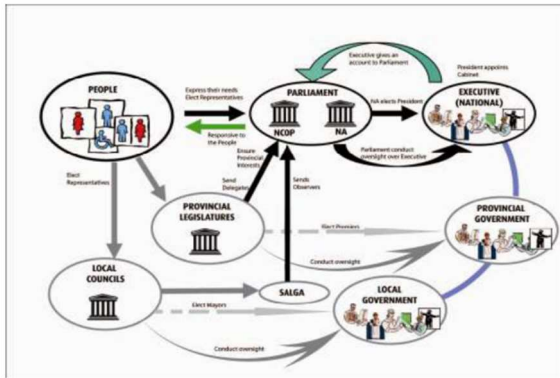
In 1999, law experts issued the Report on Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability (the Corder Report)<sup>3</sup>. Based on the findings of this study and the subsequent analysis done by Parliament, an Oversight and Accountability Model (the OVAC Model) was developed<sup>4</sup>. The Model highlighted the need to further empower Parliament to ensure the Government remained responsive and accountable.

---

<sup>2</sup> These institutions are formally known as the State Institutions supporting Constitutional Democracy and fall under Chapter 9 of the Constitution.

<sup>3</sup> Report on Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability (Corder, Jagwanth and Soltau) (1999).

<sup>4</sup> The Oversight and Accountability Model, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (1999).



### *The Oversight and Accountability Model, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa*

An independent assessment of Parliament followed in 2009<sup>5</sup> and, in 2017, the High-Level Panel on the Assessment of Key Legislation and the Acceleration of Fundamental Change released its findings.<sup>6</sup> Parliament has also been guided by jurisprudence and precedent and built relations with other institutions of State such as the Public Service Commission, the Public Protector and the Auditor-General.

While Parliament has evolved, South African society still faces persistent socio-economic challenges – poverty, unemployment and inequality. These have been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, rising costs of basic foodstuff, energy shortages, urbanization and other emergent phenomena. This means that Parliament must continue to introspect and refine its strategic approach in respect of oversight and accountability over the Executive.

### **Parliamentary Oversight and Corruption**

One of the tasks of Parliament has been to ensure that scarce State resources have not been misdirected, wasted or stolen. Parliament therefore diagnosed corruption as a potential risk and so passed a plethora of laws to limit its prevalence. These included the Public Service Act (1994), the Executive Members' Ethics Act (1998), the Public Finance Management Act (1999), the Protected Disclosures Act (2000) and the *Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (2004)*.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament (2009).

<sup>6</sup> Report of the High-Level Panel on the Assessment of Key Legislation and the Acceleration of Fundamental Change (2017).



*Parliament also adopted a Code of Ethics for its own members.*<sup>7</sup> Corruption nevertheless persisted and, by 2016, had become a dominant theme in public discourse. This was influenced, in part, by the “State of Capture Report”, issued by the then Public Protector.<sup>8</sup>

The State of Capture Report related to complaints of alleged improper and unethical conduct by the then President and other state functionaries, and the undue involvement of private interests in the appointment and removal of ministers and directors of State-Owned Entities (SOEs). The Public Protector found that, with reference to the complaints, there was evidence of wide-scale impropriety. Moreover, there was evidence that certain persons outside of the State had wielded undue power especially in some SOEs. At the same time, the Public Protector acknowledged that her investigation had proven that her office did not have the resources to traverse all the questions raised.”<sup>9</sup> She therefore proposed that the President “*appoint a commission of inquiry headed by a judge solely selected by the Chief Justice who shall provide one name to the President*”<sup>10</sup> to pursue the allegations.<sup>11</sup>

### **The State Capture Commission**

The President established the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State, (the State Capture Commission) by way of a Proclamation in the Government Gazette on 25 January 2018.<sup>12</sup> The State Capture Commission was chaired by the then Deputy Chief Justice of South Africa, Justice Raymond Zondo. The State Capture Commission reported to the President who tabled the report in Parliament on 23 October 2022 – four years later.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> More recently, Parliament adopted the Political Party Funding Act (2018) and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Amendment Bill (2021).

<sup>8</sup> *State of Capture Report*. Public Protector of South Africa, 2017. The reports of the Public Protector are available online.

<sup>9</sup> *State of Capture Report*. Paragraph 8.1, page 352.

<sup>10</sup> *State of Capture Report*. Paragraph 8.4, page 353.

<sup>11</sup> The recommendations of the Public Protector are binding. See the judgment by the Constitutional Court [*Republic of South Africa v Public Protector of the Republic of South Africa and Others* (41636/19) [2019]].

<sup>12</sup> Government Gazette, Proclamation 3 of 2018 (No 41436).

<sup>13</sup> Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State (2022).

As part of its mandate, the State Capture Commission discussed the evolution of parliamentary oversight and its perceived failure to arrest state capture. It then identified a number of weaknesses in the legislature and how these could be remedied. As a start, the State Capture Commission advocated for a more proactive and consistent approach to oversight and the imposition of what the Corder Report called “*amendatory accountability*”<sup>14</sup> – which requires that, where Government defects have been uncovered, they be corrected.

It should be noted that the State Capture Commission relied on the evidence produced by Parliament through two inquiries, one in 2016 when the ad hoc committee on the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) was established and made critical findings, including that the public broadcaster was compromised by lapse of governance and that the board did not discharge its fiduciary duties. The second was conducted in 2017 when the Portfolio Committee on Public Enterprises conducted its own inquiry into Eskom Hld SOC Ltd (electricity public utility) and made critical findings around the former CEO’s role and benefits received.

These were described by Justice Zondo to serve “as an example of appropriate parliamentary oversight and shows that, where there was a will, there was a way.”

15

The State Capture Commission’s recommendations for Parliament can be classified into four types. First, it called for statutory reforms including changes to the electoral system and the augmentation of the privileges and protections afforded to members so that they could exercise their duties without fear of detrimental consequences from their political parties. In terms of Parliament’s rules, it supported the establishment of a committee to oversee the Presidency and the institutionalization of a system to track and follow-up with parliamentary resolutions. The State Capture Commission also argued for additional capacity and recourses to be made available to parliamentarians. The last, and most extensive category of proposals concerned shortcomings in Government departments and agencies. These involved, among other things, the –

- Management failures in departments and SOEs;

---

<sup>14</sup> Report on Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability (Corder, Jagwanth and Soltau) (1999).

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/politics/zondo-makes-damning-findings-against-parliament-on-oversight-role-to-hold-executive-accountable-28a785ad-62f5-4f73-8032-9d56011a9b74>

- Procurement and accounting weaknesses across the State;
- Implementation of ethics laws and codes of conduct for public-office bearers and officials; and the
- Effectiveness of existing anti-corruption instruments.

### **Reforms to enhance Parliamentary oversight and accountability**

As mentioned above, Parliament has been seized with efforts to improve its oversight practices and foster accountability for some time. Following the Corder Report and OVAC Model, Parliament passed the Money Bills and Related Matters Act (2009)<sup>16</sup>, which gave the legislature the means to amend budgets of state departments. The Act also set up a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) to offer independent, objective and professional advice and analysis to Parliament on matters related to the budget and other money Bills. The National Assembly later adopted rules to regulate motions of no confidence and the impeachment of the President. These rules were invoked on a number of occasions – some votes being conducted by secret ballot. In terms of the administration, content advisors or subject experts were appointed to each oversight committee to strategically guide committees on the portfolios they oversee. More recently, a Parliamentary Institute was created to consolidate and propagate best practices across the legislative sector<sup>17</sup> and support the continuous development of both members and staff.

In response to the report of the State Capture Commission, Parliament commenced an assessment of how the recommendations could be executed. To highlight some of the results of this process, Parliament reiterated that recent reforms to the Electoral Act<sup>18</sup> had made provision for independent candidates to contest elections and that this would have an impact on the bonds between political parties and parliamentarians.

On the question of House resolutions, the National Assembly Rules Committee since passed new rules which stipulate that all resolutions coming before the House must be substantiated and include timeframes for reply. This will assist to track Executive compliance. Additionally, the Speaker will now maintain a record of resolutions and, in the event of delays, liaise with the Government.

---

<sup>16</sup> Money Bills and Related Matters Act (Act 9 of 2009) (as amended).

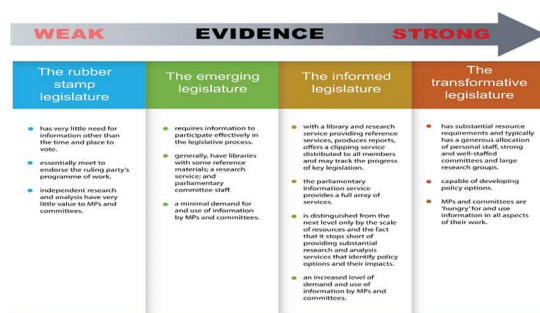
<sup>17</sup> The legislative sector consists of the National Parliament and nine provincial legislatures.

<sup>18</sup> Electoral Amendment Act (Act 1 of 2023).

In relation to committee oversight over the Presidency, the Rules Committee instigated a comparative study which included a benchmarking visit to the House of Commons in the United Kingdom to understand the instruments employed by other Parliaments for this purpose. In the case of the portfolio-specific recommendations from the State Capture Commission, the relevant oversight committees were mandated to pursue these with the respective departments and agencies and report thereon on a quarterly basis.

## A New Strategic Direction

The proceedings associated with the State Capture Commission are an example of the ever-evolving dynamics which demand a responsive and transformative Parliament. Drawing on Polsby's typology of parliaments,<sup>19</sup> the South African Parliament has drawn on the lessons learned over the last two decades of constitutional transformation to review its approach to the core mandates of the institution.



*Adaptation of A Typology of parliaments based on Nelson Polsby Source Greenstein & Polsby, 1975 cited in INASP, 2017:25)*

Of paramount importance is the need to improve public trust in the institution and for Parliament to be seen to represent the people.

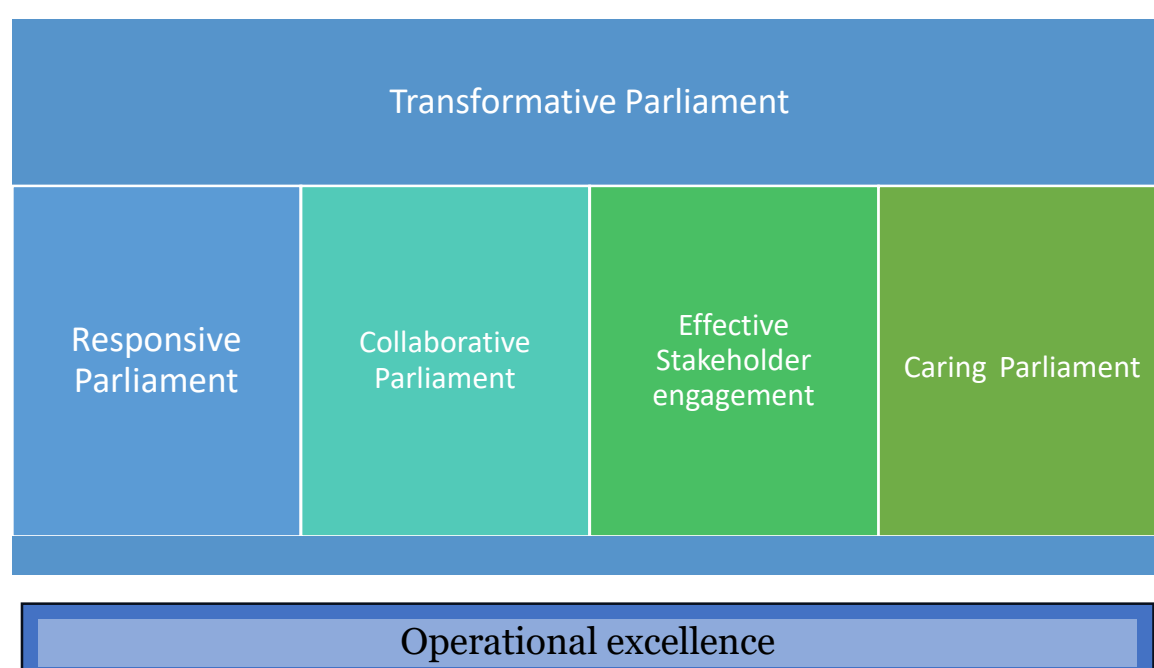
To ensure that it is able to respond to change, Parliament evaluates its operations and targets every year and prepares an annual performance plan and budget.<sup>20</sup> The

<sup>19</sup> Figure: Al Zackaria, J Thomas, R Begg & C Blaser, Adaptation of A Typology of parliaments (based on Nelson Polsby (Greenstein and Polsby, 1975 cited in INASP, 2017:25) in Parliamentary evidence use in Representation, 2021:185.

<sup>20</sup> Parliament of South Africa, Annual Performance Plan 2023.

latest plan was informed by a consultative process and a recognition that the prevailing circumstances, in the nation and institution itself, required Parliament to embark on a new strategic path.

In so doing, there was an acknowledgement that the legislature had to move away from high-level oversight towards qualitative, impact-making interventions with a focus on tangible outcomes and service delivery. To accomplish this, the annual performance plan envisages the development of a set of over-arching indicators against which progress can be measured. This will include the use of technology to develop committee dashboards, country indicator dashboards and to track progress with the recommendations of the State Capture Commission.



### *The macro framework for the Seventh Parliament*

In part as a reaction to the State Capture Commission's observations about capacity constraints, the legislature also undertook an analysis of its budget, especially the financial requirements for committees, and has engaged with National Treasury to find ways in which shortfalls can be addressed. This was also necessary because of the fire that destroyed the National Assembly Chamber last year and the concomitant need to reprioritize funds. Parliament is also committed to expanding the services for members. Research and legal services will be a priority. Moreover, the institution intends to ramp up its capacity-building and training programmes to equip members with analytical and technical skills. This will be coupled with new systems to support economic modelling, data analysis, and scenario planning to facilitate qualitative oversight. The formalisation of

stakeholder partnerships will also be key, harnessing the combined strengths of the legislative sector – the national Parliament, provincial legislatures, and South African Local Government Association (SALGA). This initiative will allow the sector to work together to facilitate effective oversight over the key priorities.

South Africa will hold its seventh democratic elections next year. While each Parliament has had its own character, the institution has continued to learn and grow. In the case of oversight, the legal and procedural framework has been significantly expanded to give Parliament the powers it needs to advance accountability. But these powers have not been applied consistently and, in some instances, lapses have allowed public services to stagnate and corruption to endure. It is for these reasons that Parliament has embraced a new strategic direction to strengthen oversight and accountability over the Executive.

**Ms Sarah Davies (UK)** asked whether the Powers and Privileges Act includes protection for witnesses or others giving evidence to select committees. Giving evidence and assisting parliament can have consequences for individuals, for example they might lose their job, she asked how they address this issue in South Africa?

**Mr Mahmoud Etman (Egypt)** asked what does the parliaments have to do about the findings of the committee, did the parliament take measures as result?

**Mr George Xolile (South Africa)** responded that the Powers and Privileges Act protects members in the House, where staff have sensitive information there is a different act, the Protective Disclosures Act, which protects such witnesses from victimisation. There are several instruments designed for this purpose. In response to Egypt, he said that, yes, the South African Parliament has acted in response to the report. Eight members were implicated in instances of state capture and the Ethics Committee of the parliament has now investigated those cases. Some members were cleared of wrong doing and some sanctioned. The Criminal Court investigates separately.



## **6. Communication: Mr Edgar Sequeira Martins, Secretary General of the National Parliament of Timor Leste, 'Promoting transparency and accountability through better institutional communication in Parliaments'**

**Mr Edgar Sequeira Martins** presented the following communication:

Honourable Secretaries General and Delegates of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

First of all, I would like to extend a word of thanks to Angola and its Assembly for the warm welcome they have given us and for the magnificent organisation of this Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. For us Timorese, it has a special meaning, because Angola is a Portuguese-speaking sister country and the success of a sister country is also the success of East Timor.

It is also the first time that I have participated in this Assembly and it is a great honour for me to be able to share some of the experiences of the National Parliament of Timor-Leste's efforts to have more youth participation and involvement in the process of defining and approving public policies.

Dear delegates,

Since the approval of the last Strategic Plan, Parliament has prioritised the involvement of Timorese citizens in all its activities, creating special conditions to attract the participation of women and young people.

With this in mind, today I want to talk to you about the healthy relationship that has been established between the parliamentarians and the youth of Timor-Leste. Young people are the future of our country and it is part of Parliament's duty, as a body that represents all citizens, not only to listen to them, but also to create new channels of direct communication with them, so that their opinions are taken into account and so that young people learn from the MPs to take a responsible and serious look at the development of their country.

In order to create and strengthen this relationship between young people and MPs, and with the help of the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Parliament Project, Parliament created a Young Parliamentarians Group, which is made up of Members of Parliament under the age of 45, which has become an open door for open and transparent discussion of priority issues for young Timorese.

But in order to reach young people, it was essential to identify the channels of access to the various types of young people. To this end, a Youth Behaviour Study was carried out in which 8 personas were developed, representing the various types of young Timorese.

Each of the personas is associated with a set of descriptive characteristics of young people, both urban and rural. From this study, a report was produced which was

freely accessible to parliamentarians. With the results of this study, Parliament identified 8 ways to better reach young people, with very well-defined communication channels.

Based on these, the communication strategy was defined and an activity plan was drawn up.

In co-operation with the UNDP's Youth Engagement team, a variety of activities were developed, some of which are very innovative and which I'll explain below.

Through digital platforms, it was possible to access young people's opinions on issues relevant to the country, such as the environment, the main needs of young people and how to overcome obstacles such as youth unemployment. This innovation also acted as a first step in Parliament's digital transformation, especially in its contact with citizens.

It was also possible to create an environment of interaction with the MPs with the politicians travelling in electric cars (TukTuk). The activity took place in Dili and is based on organising rides in electric TukTuk to schools and places frequented by young people, where opportunities were created to promote discussions on public policies between young people and MPs. Several videos and podcasts were produced with this interaction, creating a positive buzz about the National Parliament's policy of openness and transparency.

Several digital and public campaigns were developed where young people could make their presence felt and be heard. One example was the 'Hakoak Mehi' campaign about young people's dreams for the future. On the basis of these "dreams", various debates were organised, which led to a greater understanding on the part of MPs of young people's concerns.

A forum for dialogue and learning was also created in the organisation of the Youth Parliament, which consisted of giving 3 young people from each municipality the opportunity to experience the process of discussing a law, in this last session we talked about the importance of regulating Child Labour. From the committee meetings to the plenary vote, these young people took part in the process. Afterwards, a document with the conclusions of policies to be implemented was delivered to the members of parliament.

In a more direct way, informal debates were held with MPs in various places, some of which were less conventional, such as a beach clean-up operation in which the importance of the environment and climate change was discussed. In a more interactive way, there were dynamic co-creation sessions for the creation of public policies and legislation. These sessions were held in schools, for young



people and parliamentarians, but will take place in the future will occur with other essential elements of Timorese society. From these sessions, legislative amendments and public policy documents have been produced.

Surveys have already been developed for young people, from which we have learnt about their level of understanding of parliamentary issues and their motivations for key elements of positive change in the country. The aim is to continue carrying out these questionnaires with parliamentarians as well, and to share them in such a way as to build bridges of understanding between the two.

Always with a view to respecting society, we wanted to embrace diversity by supporting the LGBTQI+ pride parade, seeking to create a space for dialogue, not always easy, about creating opportunities for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, the person they have decided to be and who makes them happiest.

An environment was also established for young people to learn and take an interest in the country's governance by sharing knowledge of public finances and analysing the State Budget. We also wanted to gain a foothold in the digital field by designing an e-learning programme using games. In these games specially developed for young people, they could deepen their knowledge of public finances and how the state spends its budget. Also in this field, a digital literacy campaign was carried out for MPs, so that they could use digital forms of communication such as ZOOM, TEAMS and other platforms more often.

But the most exciting project is the one we are currently working on, which is the creation of a Mobile Citizenship Laboratory consisting of a transformed bus with podcast studios, communication and video equipment, which will be used by the MPs during their visits to the municipalities, inviting them to talk and share their views on relevant issues in East Timor. This initiative is truly innovative and aims to strengthen the connection with young people in rural and more remote areas. As I have shown, the involvement of young Timorese is a focus of the National Parliament of Timor-Leste, which has helped us to understand the different perspectives of young people, to accept their political activism and the way they affirm their commitment to their country. All of this has been made possible, once again, by the creation of a transparent, inclusive and open Parliament. This openness has been aided by the UNDP which, in addition to these activities, has helped to establish TV Parlamento, which is a means of institutional communication from Parliament outwards, for everyone. As part of our work with journalists, we have been working on the issue of freedom of expression and we have built a new building that can accommodate journalists during debates, with computers, internet access and advanced communications equipment.

Ladies and gentlemen delegates,

It is these innovative initiatives that I have come to present to you today, in the hope that they will somehow inspire you to also invest in the young people of your countries, as a promise of commitment to continuous development and a constant opportunity for dialogue between all sectors of society.

So I conclude with a vote of thanks for hosting Timor-Leste and with best wishes for the success of this session.

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, thanked the member for their presentation and commented that combatting disinformation is becoming increasingly important and difficult.



## **7. GENERAL DEBATE: The renewal of representative democracies in a time of crisis: challenges and opportunities?**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, invited Mr Georg Kleemann, Deputy Secretary General of the Bundesrat, to moderate the General Debate:

**Mr Georg Kleemann, Deputy Secretary General of the Bundesrat**, spoke as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
dear Colleagues,

The world is changing. Whether politically, geopolitically or socially, the 21st century has already presented us with numerous global challenges: economic and financial crises, a migration crisis, global pandemic, climate change, war in many places around the world – to name just a few of the biggest issues our societies are facing and for which our democratic institutions need to find solutions. More than ever they are called upon to provide answers to questions that on their own, namely at national level, they would struggle to provide.

In addition to these external challenges, for several years now we have seen a growing dissatisfaction and scepticism towards the traditional model of representative democracy. Our democracies must also prove themselves at home and keep demonstrating that this form of government remains the best for the

benefit of all citizens. In some countries, this “internal crisis of democracy” manifests itself in falling voter turnout, dwindling trust in political institutions, stakeholders and procedures, the loss of party-political allegiance and at the same time growing extra-parliamentary protests. Around the world, autocratic and sometimes anti-democratic tendencies seem to be on the rise, on the streets, in parliaments – and sometimes also at the top of government.

The reasons why people turn their backs on established political procedures and stakeholders, as well as the challenges that representative democracy faces at home, are multi-layered and often both interdependent and overlapping. I would like to briefly outline four of these points that I have noticed with regard to Germany and that are being discussed in Germany.

On the one hand, an alienation between those in power and the population is often identified when there is talk about the “establishment”, “rule of the elites” or “those at the top”. Citizens often no longer feel part of the system, but consider themselves to be mere observers. There is a perception that, ultimately, only certain groups can influence political decisions through the parliament elected by all citizens. Those who can make their voices heard through interest groups, NGOs or lobbyists get their demands accepted, others fall by the wayside. This dissatisfaction feeds the demand for less representation and more direct participation of citizens in political decisions. A demand, however, that calls into question the very principle of representative democracy.

In addition – as has already been touched upon at the beginning – politics and society are facing numerous challenges that can no longer be adequately addressed at the national level alone. Phenomena such as climate change or global environmental problems need a concerted approach – political decisions that inevitably require intergovernmental cooperation, perhaps also in consultation with international bodies. This poses a challenge to representative democracy as national parliaments tend to lose influence in favour of the executive, leading to less transparent decision-making and the dilution of responsibilities.

In terms of decision-making, representative democracy is also often accused of having inefficient decision-making processes and of not addressing urgent problems quickly enough. Democracy thrives on discourse and requires not only majority decisions but also the effective protection of minorities, for example the broadest possible involvement of all affected stakeholders in transparent procedures. At times, these procedures can be very time-consuming. Moreover, in recent years, the fragmentation of the political landscape and the majorities in many parliaments have not made it easier to find compromises in some countries.

Finally, it has to be noted that a large part of the political discourse nowadays is conducted outside of parliament. While social media offers broader participation opportunities for citizens, it has also created new risks. Misinformation, filter bubbles or the targeted manipulation of public opinion through the use of artificial intelligence are increasingly noticeable phenomena and have a considerable influence on the democratic discourse. They lead to uncertainty and further undermine the already reduced trust of citizens in political institutions and representative democracy.

And using social media as a communication channel is extremely easy, while at the same time having an enormous impact. Moreover, the potential for anonymity of the internet means that people can publicise vitriolic appeals and opinions without having to take any responsibility for them. These facts are also used by the enemies of democracy and by extremists who purport to have simple solutions for complex problems. They polarise the political landscape with their messages, making it difficult to have a genuine debate on political issues in democratic society.

Dear Colleagues,

I think we should, we must take these challenges seriously and face them, and we must try to provide answers. I look forward to our discussion and, in addition to my introductory remarks for the debate, I would like to leave you with the following questions that we should take into consideration in our efforts to find answers:

- What do you see as the biggest challenge for representative democracy?
- Do we actually need a renewal of representative democracy in the sense of a change, or is it perhaps enough to adapt certain procedures and practices?
- Is representative democracy still in keeping with the times or is there a need for more direct citizen participation through referendums, citizens' councils and citizens' committees?
- Do the internet and social media offer opportunities for more participation, for an increased exchange between representatives and the sovereign?
- How can we make our parliaments more resilient against the enemies of democracy? And
- What can we do as parliamentary administrations to strengthen representative democracy?

Dear Colleagues, I would hereby like to open the debate – and I hope there will be lively contributions, compelling ideas and a productive discussion!

**Ms Sarah Davies (UK)** commented that, as Secretaries General, we must think about how to support members of parliament as they are at the forefront of these challenges. She reflected that parliamentary administrations must provide the right

social media, wellbeing, and security support to elected members to face these pressures. With regards to young people, she said they are less interested in party politics and much more interested in issues. She said that e-petitions on issues have really helped engagement with this demographic.

As a final point, she commented that as debates become more polarised it is a challenge for officials and impartiality because they can be accused of taking sides. In the UK they have created new impartiality policies for staff working directly with members. For catering staff and security staff these restrictions do not apply. The restrictions are to protect the staff from getting involved in these debates.

**Mr Philippe Delivet (France)** said that under the constitution, national sovereignty belongs to the people, it is direct and representative democracies combined. However, referendums are not frequently used and parliamentary democracy is at the centre of the system. On the challenge of legitimacy, he said that parliaments receive it through democratic elections and the role of the parliament is to act in line with people.

**Mr Naim ÇOBAN (Türkiye)** said that in representative democracies the challenges are due to interdependencies between the three powers (judicial, executive and parliament) which must be both in harmony and independent. Where there is conflict between the powers it needs resolution. Institutional capacity needs to be built and cooperation maintained at a high level. As Secretaries General, we need to be impartial in our service and this helps when there is conflict between the powers.

**Mr Omar Al Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates)** said it is difficult to truly represent public opinion because we do not know what the public really thinks. A lot of parliaments are resorting more and more to social media to discover what the people think about topics. Some parliaments track public opinion trends. However, the challenge is that there is a great deal of manipulation on these platforms. Many countries are exploiting social media to manipulate public opinion in other states. The prevailing image on social media may not in fact be the truth.

**Mr Xolile George (South Africa)** asked how we change people from being observers to participants in democracy. In South Africa, the constitution enjoins parliament to involve the public in the legislative process. They also have a public participation model which seeks to regulate the relationship between parliament and the people. The issue of informing and educating the public is difficult. If a committee undertakes public hearings on a bill parliament is supposed to raise awareness about the process. In the recent past, court challenges have occurred because public participation was not properly conducted, people were not made aware of the bill and the mechanisms were not deemed sufficient to engage the

public in the process. He said another aspect is feedback, where there are public hearings once people have spoken there is no feedback mechanism. They do not understand what has happened as result of their input. Lastly, on petitions, currently only a member can submit a petition in South Africa but they are reviewing a direct public petition mechanism.

**Mr Mahmoud Etan (Egypt)** said a big part of the political dialogue is happening outside parliament. The president therefore called for a national dialogue where all social factions and religious denominations are represented and all topics are tackled. This has led to initiatives being implemented by relevant authorities, for example, detainees have received amnesty. He said this model of direct democracy works well alongside representative democracy. He cited a paper called '21<sup>st</sup> century democracy' which suggest solely representative's democracies are no longer acceptable in the modern world.

**Mr Jean NGUVULU KHOJI (Democratic Republic of Congo)** said representative democracy is a good thing but when elected and after elected they are presented under a political banner. Once elected, they are in the party and in doing this they ensure the defence of their party's financial and political interests, so much so that it can seem they are no longer working for the good will of the people who elected them but in favour of this political reality. Elected members are divided between conflicting forces and may sometimes act in personal interest. There is a tendency to protect their own family, or their wider political family. It is a challenge that all parliaments face because Members of parliament must work for the electorate not for their political family.

**Mr Souleymane TOURÉ (Guinea)** said the challenges depend on the geography, openness, culture and political framework of a country. In periods of crisis, there are opportunities for citizens to renew their relationship with elected members. He noted his colleagues comments about competition between political families and the electorate as an issue. He said that people cannot trust representative democracy if they do not trust the people in power. If parliaments do not develop policies for the people, there is rejection of representative democracy.

**Mr Shri Sumant Narain (India)** commented on impartiality asking whether objective briefings and evidence based policy making is the answer to difficulties with impartiality? Additionally, he asked how the topics that committees choose can be kept relevant and topical. How can secretaries and parliament collaborate on a sustainable solution?

**Mr Jean-Philippe BROCHU (Canada)** spoke about two challenges in the Canadian government. Firstly, with regards representative democracy, there needs to be a two-way relationship which engages the people. This must be real

engagement and not merely a façade. Petitions are a good example of this type of engagement. Second point, fake news on social media is a big issue for parliaments. Third point, some people who vote do not understand how parliamentary institutions function. Media coverage and scrutiny is not always informative on how the institutions works.

**Mr Georg Kleeman (Germany)**, thanked the speakers and commented that democracies everywhere are facing wide ranging challenges. However, representative democracy by its very nature relies on trust, the trust citizens put in their representatives. It is a particular responsibility of parliaments to explore reasons for a loss of trust and discover how they can reconnect with the people again.

He said supranational problems require better cooperation between parliaments, political decisions need to be explained clearly to people and this requires freedom of information and transparency. He quoted a German author, Martin Rutter, who said parliaments must “look at the mouths of the people”. However, listening to the people is not the same as pandering them. Citizens councils providing advice to parliament, as practiced by the German Bundestag, has a role. Direct involvement by citizens in decision making can restore faith and power. Overall, as a parliamentary administration we can play a role in explaining parliament in our public relations work. There is also a responsibility on public education about parliament because an educated public will make better decisions. He said secretaries general must take decisive action against hate speech, disinformation and threats against elected members.

He concluded by saying that crisis are always opportunities to make something good even better and quoted Winston Churchill: “democracy is the worst form of government, except all the other forms of government that have been tried from time to time”.

## **8. Concluding remarks**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, thanked members for their interesting and varied contributions and reminded members that we return at 2.30pm.

He closed the sitting.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.45 PM.

## FOURTH SITTING

**Wednesday 25 October 2023 (afternoon)**

Mr Najib El Khadi, President, in the Chair

---

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 4.20PM (THE JOINT ASGP-IPU CONFERENCE WAS HELD IN THE EARLY PART OF THE AFTERNOON SESSION)

### 1. Introductory remarks

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, welcomed everyone back to the fourth sitting of the ASGP.

### 2. Update on the Centre for Innovation in Parliament

**Andy Richardson** updated the Association on the work of the Centre for Innovation in Parliament.

**Mrs Boemo SEKGOMA (SADC)** commented that she is very excited to create a platform which will help parliaments in her region connect and share information with each other. She said the project will give them a head start on teamwork and problem solving across borders. It will ensure that the project which the IPU started will continue into the future.

**Mauro Limeira Mena Barreto (Brazil)** gave a presentation on his project to create a ‘Parliamentary Data Science Hub.’

### 3. Workshops on the IPU's Climate Action Plan ahead of COP28

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President** warmly welcomed Ms Kareen Jabre to present on the IPU project ‘My parliament, my planet.’ He spoke as follows:

I am personally convinced that parliaments have an essential role, on the one hand, by demonstrating practical solutions and, on the other, by acting as a focal point to mobilise citizens. In our capacity as secretaires general, we have a responsibility to lead by example, in our parliaments, to be at the fore front of the institutional fight against climate change.



The ASGP has already debated this topic on several occasions. In Manama, we heard several secretaries general – in particular Romania, India, Turkey and France – presenting concrete actions they have put in place in their parliaments to respond to the climate challenge.

Some of us have also been interviewed by the IPU, in a video, to talk about the concrete actions we are taking in our parliaments. It seems important to me that we renew our discussions, with Kareen Jabre, about the next steps.

I will personally assure that this questions is raised regularly at our session, and I would like to assure the IPU of the total cooperations of our Association with the work they are undertaking on this subject.

**Ms Kareen Jabre** presented a PowerPoint presentation on the IPU project ‘Parliaments for the Planet’ which is about mobilizing parliaments to act on the climate emergency. [Slides are available on the ASGP website here: <https://asgp.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Parliaments-for-the-Planet-Kareen-JABRE-IPU.pdf>]



#### **4. Guide on the role of Secretary General in the 21st Century, with a particular focus on artificial intelligence'**

**Mr Remco Nehmelman, Vice-President**, spoke as follows:

Dear colleagues,

It is a great honour to be here today and to speak to you about this important topic. Artificial Intelligence, or AI, gained tremendous momentum when ChatGPT was introduced. Rest assured, this speech was not written by the program, although I – and probably many of you – may have been experimenting with the tool. Am I right?

Of course, AI has been on the top of our minds for much longer. In the Netherlands, the working of algorithms has been a major source of unrest, both politically and socially, when in 2020 the House of Representatives unraveled how algorithms had disrupted and destroyed the lives of thousands of families in the Netherlands. Computer systems at the national tax authority had unlawfully deemed that those families had wrongly received childcare allowance.

And, yes, this scandal was not the fault of computer systems: laws aimed at preventing and detecting fraud were at the heart. The government, parliament and the legal system were to blame. But still, algorithms played their part once the computers had been programmed, according to the adopted laws.

The scandal at the Dutch national tax authority is the largest of its kind but does not stand alone. We now know that also at the government agency responsible for student loans and scholarships, has unlawfully used discriminatory algorithms to detect fraud.

As a result of the childcare allowance scandal the Dutch Senate has for the past two years discussed the growing influence of AI on decision making processes and the role of the Senate. This has resulted in a debate with the minister of Digital Affairs. One of the conclusions of the debate was that the senate would like to have more specialized expertise on AI within the support staff.

Currently, we are in the process of hiring staff to help us understand both the technical side of AI and algorithms, as well as the legal implications. This will not only benefit the Members, but also me and my colleagues. How to get a grip on AI and equip both staff and politics with tools when controlling our government: these are the questions at the center of the focus of the Dutch Senate.

Also, the Council of Europe is drafting a treaty on Artificial Intelligence with input from national parliaments, after the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on the Committee of Ministers to elaborate a legally binding instrument governing artificial intelligence based on a comprehensive approach, deals with the whole life cycle of AI-based systems, is addressed to all stakeholders, and includes mechanisms to ensure the implementation of this instrument.

It is important to have democratic control, especially where artificial intelligence, algorithms and coding are concerned. Because fundamental rights are at stake.

Since I wanted to know what your parliaments are doing to secure this democratic control, I sent out a questionnaire. We have collected the results and will present them right after my introduction.

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your attention, I look forward to the exchange of views and hearing your thoughts and experiences.

**Ms Laura van der Hast** provided the following statistics from the survey:

- 55% of parliaments are currently using AI (eg. automatic transcription of debates, automatic speech recognition, and chatbots.)
- 14% of the parliaments are affected by AI technologies, mostly manipulation of videos or photographs of MPs
- 68% say their parliament does not yet have a plan to establish norms for the use of AI in the parliament.
- 32% of parliaments are working on setting norms. For example, Sweden, Nepal, Chile, Bahrain, Austria, Canada, and Ireland.
- 70% of parliaments expect the parliament's ICT systems will have to be renewed as a result of the advent of AI and big data.
- 88% expect the ICT systems used in the parliament to be sufficiently secure.
- 79% of the parliaments have not yet established governance for AI. Several countries do have a parliamentary committee on digital affairs (Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, and Uruguay).
- 58% expect the role of the Secretary General will change with the advent of AI and big data. However, most expect the relationship with MPs to remain the same.
- In 85% of the parliaments, sufficient knowledge to deal with the developments in the field of AI is currently not available and 67% foresee problems in attracting staff with a knowledge of AI and big data.
- 43% expect jobs (mainly operational jobs) to disappear in the future.

A summary document can be found on the ASGP website here: [https://asgp.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Results-of-questionnaire\\_Remco-Nehmelman.pptx](https://asgp.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Results-of-questionnaire_Remco-Nehmelman.pptx).

**Mr Naim ÇOBAN (Türkiye)** commented that these meetings have really brought home the importance of AI to our work, the opportunities it presents as well as the challenges. He said that parliaments need a roadmap for addressing these issues.

**Mr Remco Nehmelman (Netherland)** responded that in the Netherlands there is a PHD student who will act as a parliamentary assistant on the AI project and provide academic research. He said secretaries generals ensure the law-making process and need research into the AI issue before making decisions. It is important to understand how any law that seeks to regulate AI will work in practice before legislating. He said any roadmap should include people, software, processes, lessons learnt from technicians and that new jobs will appear in this field. In the Netherlands, he has started a dedicated team of five people to look at these issues and that it is estimated that one third of all bill making is already influenced by AI systems.

*Vice President, Jose Pedro Montero, briefly replaced the President in the Chair.*



**5. Communication by Mr Mahmoud Etman, Secretary general of the Egyptian Senate, 'The skills of parliamentary administrations in terms of the regulation and use of artificial intelligence'**

**Mr Mahmoud Etman** presented the following communication:

His Excellency Dr. Najib EL KHADI

President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

Dear colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude for being invited to participate in this important meeting with this distinguished elite of Their Excellencies Secretaries General of parliaments, to consult, coordinate and exchange legal and technical expertise on issues of parliamentary work on the international stage, in a way that would contribute to improving the performance and work of national parliaments and achieving more joint cooperation among them to meet the demands and aspirations of our peoples.

Please allow me to pay tribute to the prominent role played by the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, led by His Excellency Dr. Najib EL Khadi, Speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives, and his assisting team, in order to support and develop mechanisms for joint work and cooperation among the General Secretariats of national parliaments, so that the Association would achieve its goals and promote international parliamentary work.

Honorable Attendees

There is no doubt that we live today in a world that is witnessing an accelerating technological and digital revolution and an increasing use of artificial intelligence applications, which impose themselves in all domains of life, including parliamentary work, providing opportunities and potentials in the field of data analysis and the speed of completing routine tasks such as managing documents, scheduling meetings, responding to inquiries quickly and efficiently, assisting in making decisions and providing recommendations based on the available information, which would ultimately contribute to improving the performance of parliamentary work.

Of course, the use of artificial intelligence is considered one of the essential elements in the digital transformation of parliaments, as it provides great potentials for the parliamentary administration to efficiently and effectively perform its tasks. For example, the use of artificial intelligence in the field of parliamentary research can be of great importance, as it provides speed and accuracy in collecting and

analyzing large amounts of data related to parliamentary legislation and decisions, and even converting this data into valuable information and comprehensive accurate reports. Moreover, through linguistic analysis of texts of discussions conducted by parliament members in committee meetings and plenary sessions, it is possible to know the most frequently used vocabulary and phrases as well as identify the most important events and issues that were discussed during a specific period or periods of time.

Mr. President

Many parliaments have begun to use artificial intelligence to analyze existing policies, study their various effects and predict their potential outcomes, which can help in understanding the directions and paths associated with these policies. Artificial intelligence is also used to analyze parliamentary voting patterns and the stance of representatives in various issues and track their political ideas and orientations.

Moreover, smart platforms are now playing a significant role in the promotion and development of the parliamentary work, and the enhancement of communication among parliament members and citizens. These platforms provide reliable and up to date information about parliamentary work such as sessions' and committees' agendas and draft laws up to discussion. Furthermore, they grant citizens access to parliamentary documents, reports, minutes and discussions.

Honorable attendees,

There is no doubt that parliamentary departments need continuous training aimed at dealing with modern technologies and using artificial intelligence applications to analyze data bases related to parliament's sessions, draft laws and their amendments, parliamentary oversight activities, transfer audio and video records into written reports and making them accessible for parliament members or citizens through electronic platforms or portals.

In this regard, several steps can be taken to enhance the abilities of the parliamentary departments to deal with artificial intelligence, as follows:

- 1) The availability of creative and innovative leadership that believes in the importance and necessity of dealing with modern technologies and artificial intelligence applications in parliamentary work, and seeks to provide the necessary resources to implement these technologies.
- 2) Encouraging workers in the various parliamentary departments to develop their professional skills, learn the concepts and principles of artificial intelligence, deal with electronic management systems, communication platforms, and related tools and technologies, and

- enhance their knowledge of programming rules, statistical analysis, and data analysis.
- 3) Identifying and developing the necessary training plans and providing modern and appropriate training tools to train employees on modern digital technologies and artificial intelligence applications, through lectures, educational courses and workshops.
  - 4) Working on building a new culture among parliament employees and members concerning the importance of modern technology and artificial intelligence applications to improve the services provided.
  - 5) Encouraging cooperation with experts and specialists in designing programs of modern technologies and artificial intelligence platforms, and working with them on identifying the best applications and expertise suitable for the parliament.
  - 6) Developing legislation and regulations that regulate dealing with artificial intelligence, ensure its proper use, and ensure the preservation of privacy, data protection, accuracy and credibility of analyzes and reports, while conducting periodic evaluations of the artificial intelligence system as well as raising awareness and continuous training of workers on how to use artificial intelligence in a safe and responsible way.

At the end of my speech, I thank you for listening, and I am confident that our current meeting will achieve the goals and objectives that we all hope for, especially in the light of the participation of this distinguished elite of Secretaries-General who have extensive experience in institutional parliamentary work.

I would like to extend my sincere wishes for good health and wellness to all of you and for your peoples' further progress and prosperity.

**Mr Naim ÇOBAN (Türkiye)** asked whether he could give a concrete example of the use of AI during the law-making process?

**Mr Mahmoud Etman (Egypt)** said Egypt do not use AI in the legislative process but in curating the discussions and minutes of the plenary sessions and committee minutes. It transfers what is verbal into writing. It has saved 90% of the time required to create minutes for meetings.



## **6. Elections**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President,** announced that the deadline for submitting nominations for the post of ordinary member of the Executive Committee was

closed. Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives of Thailand was elected as the sole candidate.

He announced that a new election will be held at the Geneva Assembly in March 2024 to fill the final vacancy on the Executive Committee.

He proposed that Mrs Steejit Taipiboonsuk be appointed a member of the Executive Committee by acclamation.

*The Association approved the nomination approved by acclamation.*

## **7. Concluding remarks**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, closed the sitting and reminded members that the session would recommence at 10am tomorrow. He closed the sitting.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 17.10.

## **FIFTH SITTING**

**Thursday 26 October 2023 (morning)**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President, in the Chair**

---

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 10.20AM

### **1. Introductory remarks**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President,** welcomed everyone back and summarised the programme for the day ahead.

### **2. GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: The relationship between the administration and parliamentarians**

**José Pedro Montero, Vice-President,** introduced the general debate as follows:

This general debate, which will be conducted in language groups, is focused on discussing the relationships that parliamentarians have with the officials of the parliament. It aims to explore whether these relationships should be governed by certain rules and what happens if these rules are not followed by the officials.

It should be taken into account whether there is an influence on the relationship between parliamentary officials and legislators, whether the legislator has a short or long mandate, and whether officials are authorized to engage in partisan politics within the Parliament. This is an extremely interesting topic, and it would be valuable to learn from your experiences.

Lastly, given that the officials work in the house where laws, including labor laws, are approved, is there a difference between what governs parliamentary officials in terms of labour compared to other public administration officials?



*Members split into 5 language-based groups, 2 English, 1 French, 1 Arabic and 1 Portuguese and discussed the topic for 1 hour. A rapporteur from each group then gave a short summary of discussions in their group to the plenary.*

**Ms Melissa English (Ireland)**, acted as rapporteur for the first English-speaking group, Mr Ahcène Djouahra (Algeria) was rapporteur for the Arabic-speaking group, Ms Sarah Davies (United Kingdom) was rapporteur for the second English-speaking group, Mr José Carlos (Equatorial Guinea) was rapporteur for the Portuguese-speaking group and Mr Souleymane Touré (Guinea) then presented the conclusions of their respective groups.

**Vice-President José Pedro Montero**, moderator, warmly thanked the rapporteurs for clarifying the relationship between the administration and parliaments.

### **3. Concluding Remarks**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, thanked colleagues for an excellent discussion and reminded them to return at 10am the following day.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12PM.

## SIXTH SITTING

**Wednesday 26 October 2023 (afternoon)**

Mr Najib El Khadi, President, in the Chair

---

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 2.35PM.

### 1. Introductory remarks

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, welcomed everyone back to the sixth and final sitting of the ASGP. He summarised the agenda for the afternoon.

### 2. Recent developments at the Inter-Parliamentary Union

**Ms Kareen Jabre** presented the IPU's new practical guide to human rights. The guide, available to members, provides tools for parliamentarians to self-assess their capacity to engage with gender and human rights.

It is a practical guide with two components: on the one hand, an informative part concerning the legal framework of human rights, the various obligations of States and key definitions, as well as essential institutional bodies; on the other, a reflection on how parliaments integrate human rights into their work, and what they can put in place to promote and accompany progress on human rights.

**Zeina Hilal, head of the IPU's Youth Program**, presented the handbook for parliamentarians on CEDAW. The presentation is available at <https://asgp.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/1.-Kareen-Jabre-CEDAW-handbook-2023-2.pdf>

**Mr Andy Richardson** presented the "Indicators for Democratic Parliaments" project. The presentation is available at <https://asgp.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2.-Indicateurs-democratiques-Andy-Richardson-IPU.pdf>  
The project website can be accessed at [www.parliamentaryindicators.org](http://www.parliamentaryindicators.org).

He also presented the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the field of artificial intelligence.



## **THEME: HOW HAVE PARLIAMENTS CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC?**

### **3. Communication: Mr Ahmed Manna, Secretary General of the Egyptian House of Representatives, on 'Changes in Parliament as a result of the pandemic'**

**Mr Ahmed Manna** presented the following communication:

Dear Brother Hon. Najib El Khadi  
President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments  
Honorable colleagues,

At the beginning of my speech, I would like to express my great pride to meet with you again in our prestigious forum, which truly concretizes our serious will to exchange experiences and opinions, in a way that contributes to improving the performance of the general secretariats of our parliaments with a view to achieving our desired goal, which is to develop parliamentary work for the realization of the hopes and aspirations of our peoples. Let me also extend my sincere thanks, and appreciation to our brothers in the Parliament of the Republic of Angola for their warm reception, generous hospitality, and their tireless and strenuous efforts in organizing our meetings.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Since the Coronavirus pandemic revealed its ugly face to the world, it has caused fundamental, multi-dimensional and multi-level repercussions in various aspects of life. The grave economic, social and political effects of that pandemic have brought the entire world to an exceptional test, as it has dealt harsh and painful blows to all sectors, and parliamentary work was one of the most prominent sectors negatively affected by the pandemic. This matter raised a question about ways to develop parliamentary work to be qualified to adapt to global crises such as the outbreak of epidemics.

Despite the serious repercussions that the pandemic had on parliamentary work and its legislative role, some parliaments showed a greater ability to adapt to the pandemic and its consequences, as they created new mechanisms to ensure that legislative assemblies continue to effectively perform their role in legislation and oversight. The Coronavirus pandemic also revealed the urgent need to accelerate the digital transformation in parliaments to be more flexible and able to deal with developments and crises, and to use technological tools necessary for the holding of virtual sessions, remote voting, and electronic archiving of the minutes and records, so that parliaments become more open and transparent, and are able to perform their functions and tasks effectively and competently.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I think you agree with me that the general secretariats, as the administrative and technical organs of parliaments, are concerned with means to develop and modernize parliamentary work to deal with the qualitative changes facing our contemporary world. As far as the Egyptian House of Representatives is concerned, we had a unique experience regarding the smooth functioning of the Egyptian Parliament at the time of the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Egyptian state spared no effort to maintain and strengthen the democratic process even in light of these exceptional circumstances.

The Egyptian House of Representatives has shouldered the responsibility of continued parliamentary sessions in light of the Egyptian state's need for legislative support and passing laws to control the repercussions of this pandemic, through a comprehensive plan of action that strikes a balance between preserving the health of members and staff of Parliament on the one hand and the continuity of parliamentary and legislative work on the other hand. Further, the distinguished experience of the Egyptian House of Representatives in digital transformation has contributed to mitigating the effects of the pandemic on Egyptian parliamentary work by raising the technical efficiency of human resources and IT infrastructure as well as creating and preparing an infrastructure for legislative databases, creating an electronic system for legislative and oversight tools, and fully automating the work of the General Secretariat of the House of Representatives.

In conclusion, these exceptional and critical circumstances that our contemporary world is going through require all of us to strengthen cooperation between general secretariats to confront these urgent and chronic crises. Such cooperation has become inevitable in view of the magnitude of the challenges facing us, especially with regard to the means enabling the parliaments to adapt to sudden global crises, and the necessity of thinking about new parliamentary frameworks and tools that prevent the work of parliaments from being affected by any emergency, so that our parliaments can carry out their assigned democratic roles and advocate peoples' dreams in order to turn them into a tangible reality without being affected by any circumstances. Thank you for your good attention

**Mr Saïd MOKADEM (Conseil Consultatif Maghrebin)** asked whether an evaluation of the costs of confronting the crisis, the financial cost, was calculated?

**Mr Ahmed Manna** responded that regarding the financial cost, they had to take quick measures for the legislative process to continue and resorted to foreign parties to do the job. Any delay would lead to the freezing of all projects in parliament. He said their own centre for IT is high quality but they still sometimes resort to foreign parties to undertake specialist work. He concluded there will be a new parliament in the new Cairo, they are preparing for the move and we will devote more resources to digital technology in the new building.



#### **4. Communication: Shri Sumant Narain, Joint Secretary of the Rajya Sabha of India on 'How have parliaments changed since the pandemic'**

**Shri Sumant Narain** presented the following communication:

Honourable Chair, esteemed Secretaries-General, and distinguished guests,

At the outset, I am grateful to the Chair for affording me this invaluable opportunity. I sincerely thank our generous hosts, the Parliament of Angola, for their warm hospitality. Angola, a nation of profound beauty and historical significance, finds its heart in Luanda—a city that stands as a living testament to its rich cultural heritage and limitless potential.

As we convene under this distinguished Union, please allow me to delve into our current discourse, shedding light on the remarkable journey of Parliaments in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The year 2020, often dubbed 'annus horribilis' due to the pandemic, served as a crucible, sparking an unparalleled wave of innovation and adaptability within legislative bodies worldwide.

Imagine a deserted parliament complex, once teeming with activity. Eerily quiet and still. Yet, amid the stillness, the legislative machinery hummed with unwavering determination, defying all expectations.

The pandemic-induced lockdown led us to reimagine our constitutional responsibilities, resulting in transformative shifts. Today, I am honoured to share the extraordinary journey of the Parliament of India.

The curtailment of the Budget Session, necessitated by the exigencies of the pandemic, demonstrated our unwavering commitment to safety and public health. The delayed commencement of the Monsoon Session, marked by cautious resumption, underscored our steadfast dedication to the nation's well-being.

A paradigm shift in Member seating arrangements further exemplified our adaptability. The Rajya Sabha Chamber, Galleries, and the Lok Sabha Chamber bore witness to our sessions, a testament to our ability to evolve beyond convention. While constitutionally mandated, the non-convening of the Winter Session emphasised our prioritisation of public health over tradition.

I am proud to share that the Parliament wholeheartedly supported the vaccination drives on its premises. Notably, in India, an unprecedented 2 billion digital vaccination certificates were distributed. This achievement surpasses even the combined populations of entire continents, highlighting the immense scale of this effort.

The ingenious use of television as a bridge between Chambers transcended physical constraints, enabling seamless communication among Members. Adjustments in session timings demonstrated the willingness to evolve.

Innovations extended to procedural domains, as a few rules were temporarily suspended to ensure continuity in our proceedings. The authorisation for designated Ministers to lay papers on behalf of their colleagues was a further testament to our commitment to streamline processes for safety.

Transitioning to the electronic circulation of parliamentary papers avoided personal contact and propelled us towards a more efficient and secure future. Restrictions on visitor access and controlled entry to the Press Gallery struck a balance between safeguarding public health and upholding transparency.

Special arrangements for the oath-taking of new Members adhered to social distancing norms, showcasing our adaptability in procedural matters. Guidelines and protocols were promulgated to ensure the safety of Members and officials while preserving the sanctity of their work within committee functions.

A historic milestone was achieved with the virtual presentation of Committee Reports, a testimony to our resilience in adversity. The parliamentary committee meticulously examined topical subjects, analysing the challenges and making specific recommendations.

In our pursuit of progress, Sansad TV – the parliamentary TV channel – took a significant leap forward. It meticulously archived and digitised its content, embracing the digital era to promote parliamentary democracy.

We took a crucial step to alleviate the pandemic's burdens on our Secretariat employees. Any healthcare-related expenses incurred by our employees and their immediate families were fully reimbursed, underscoring our dedication to their welfare. We streamlined financial and administrative processes and delegated significant authorities to empower the officials and ensure that work continued without delay.

Embracing the digital age, we swiftly transitioned to a work-from-home model. Files were seamlessly exchanged electronically, and remote access was facilitated. Technology became our ally in ensuring that the wheels of parliament never stopped turning, even amid the pandemic. During the Monsoon Session, we introduced a roster system, with Secretariat employees taking turns to attend to Session-related tasks, ensuring continuity.

The invaluable lessons from the pandemic have propelled the Parliament of India towards a transformative journey. It includes a significant shift towards digitising the Secretariat and adopting a paperless approach within the parliamentary proceedings. These strategic changes reflect our commitment to modernise and enhance efficiency while upholding the highest public health standards.

In this pursuit, we are implementing several strategic initiatives, especially in the New Parliament Building that was recently inaugurated:

Firstly, we are leveraging technology to streamline the management of documents, votes, and communication among parliamentarians. It includes introducing electronic voting systems designed to enhance the efficiency of our proceedings.

We have created an online platform to facilitate real-time access to essential documents, granting members immediate access to bills, reports, research materials, and other relevant information.

Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring that proceedings are conducted in multiple languages as needed, with simultaneous interpretation services to promote inclusivity and take the parliament to people even in remote parts.

The Committees continue to examine innovative and relevant subjects like disease surveillance in the country to assess our preparedness for new challenges. The skill sets of our employees are being upgraded continuously to remain abreast of the latest tools and knowledge. We are in the process of establishing a 'Research Hub' and building a 21st-century training ecosystem to propel us faster.

Lastly, a digital time management system has been implemented, overseeing speaking time limits, displaying countdowns, and providing timely notifications to members as their allotted time approaches its conclusion.

These initiatives mark a significant stride towards an efficient and accessible parliamentary system, aligning with our shared vision for a modernised and inclusive Parliament of India.

In closing, let us remember that the challenges we faced during the pandemic were not unique to any one parliament but a shared global experience. Our ability to adapt and innovate in the face of adversity demonstrates the resilience of parliamentary systems worldwide.

As we stand today, let us remain forward-looking and open to learning from one another. The experiences we have shared, the innovations we have embraced, and the lessons we have learned can serve as beacons guiding us toward more efficient, inclusive, and resilient parliamentary processes.

Let us continue to collaborate, exchange ideas, and support one another in our collective pursuit of serving our nations to the best of our abilities. Together, we can shape a future where our parliaments not only weather storms but emerge more robust, adaptable, and better equipped to meet the needs of our ever-evolving societies.

To conclude, it is my sincere hope that our shared commitment to progress may light the way forward for us all.



**Mr Baharat Raj Gautam (Nepal)** asked whether MPs are now allowed to take part virtually, from other parts of your country, during the plenary session?

**Mr Shri Sumant Narain (India)** said that their politicians believe in ‘parlay-ing’ in person and therefore prefer to be present, physically in person, rather than contributing remotely.

**Ms Sarah Davies (UK)** asked how his members feel about going paperless. She said that in her experience Members do want to be present in parliament but they often want hard copies of key papers too.

**Mr Shri Sumant Narain (India)** responded that most, if not all members, have logged into the e-office system and now receive documents online. They are accepting and approving documents online. In the new parliament building, they are going paperless even with the voting system. He said it is a continuous process and there has been a significant reduction in usage of paper.

**Mr Jean-Philippe BROCHU (Canada)** asked which of the temporary measures that India put in place for the pandemic are still in place and which have now disappeared?



**Mr Shri Sumant Narain (India)** responded that oral replies to parliamentary questions were suspended during the pandemic, only written questions were maintained. This rule was dropped after the pandemic. Social distancing rules, which placed some members in the galleries and led to staggered sittings has also been rescinded. However, the paperless trend has been maintained since the pandemic and they hope to build an evidence-based research hub.



## **5. Budget**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President** invited the Association's Co-Secretary to present the Association's 2022 budget and the draft budget for 2024, as approved by the Executive Committee that morning.

**Ms Capucine Capon, Co-Secretary**, reported that the 2022 budget had been characterized by a very good rate of collection for membership fees, as well as by the containment of session costs thanks to a drop in interpretation costs since the introduction of the remote interpretation system in Kigali.

She indicated that the draft budget for 2024 was based on the assumption of two sessions in Geneva, in spring and autumn. She indicated that the level of subscriptions fees called for was stable and invited members to check that their fees had been paid on time to ensure the smooth running of the Association's work.

With regard to the expenses forecast for 2024, she indicated that the projected session expenses linked to the organization of the two annual sessions were down slightly to take account of the reduction in interpreting costs linked to the testing of a new platform at the next session.

**President Najib El Khadi** invited the plenary to approve the achievements for 2022 and the draft budget for 2024.

*The Association approved the 2022 budget and the draft budget for 2024.*



## **6. Draft agenda for the next meeting in Geneva (Switzerland), March 2024**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, said that the next meeting of the Association would take place in Geneva in March 2024. He then presented the titles of the proposed themes and general debates for the next conference:

1. GENERAL DEBATE: The relationship between the academic world and parliaments
  2. GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: Who controls time in parliament?
  3. GENERAL DEBATE: Keeping the permanent record of debates in parliament: what are the tools of today and tomorrow?
- Theme: Attendance of Ministers of State to Parliament, to report and give explanations about their management of government business
  - Theme: Parenthood and parliament - How can parliaments support Members of Parliament who become parents, in particular what are the rules for parliamentarians who wish to take maternity and paternity leave?
  - Theme: Parliament's framework and tools for efficiently scrutinising Government spending

The Assembly *approved* the draft agenda.



## **7. Concluding remarks**

**Mr Najib El Khadi, President**, thanked all secretaries general for the quality of their work and thanked the hosts, Angola, for organising an excellent programme.

He thanked the interpreters who make communication between all the countries of the world possible. Finally, he thanked the secretariat of the Association: Ms Capucine Capon, Ms Elektra Garvie-Adams, Mr Daniel Moeller and Ms Karine Velasco.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 3.35PM.

