



UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

# Constitutional & Parliamentary Information

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

Gender Equality Seal: Chilean Senate, first parliament in the world to obtain this international certification

*(Mr Raul Guzman Uribe, Chile)*

Promoting parliamentary culture among young people: simulation of parliamentary debates

*(Mr Najib El Khadi, Morocco)*

Recent developments in the relationship between the UK Parliament and the Courts

*(Ms Chloe Mawson, United Kingdom)*

What measures have been put in place to mitigate the risk of a future event preventing your parliament from sitting?

*(General Debate)*

Parliamentary Leadership in Environmental Sustainability: The Experience of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain in obtaining ISO 14001:2015

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Restoring Democracy after Martial Law: Reforming Parliamentary Security and Introducing Remote Plenary Sessions

*(Mr Kim Minki, Republic of Korea)*

Designing modern, resilient and futuristic parliaments: Lessons from the Pakistani Senate

*(Mr Hafeez ullah Sheikh, Pakistan)*

Ensuring the safety of MPs and parliamentary staff

*(Dr Viacheslav Shtuchnyi, Ukraine)*

Ensuring the safety of MPs and parliamentary staff

*(Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada)*

Ensuring the safety of MPs and parliamentary staff

*(Mr Xolile George, South Africa)*

Ensuring the safety of MPs and parliamentary staff

*(Ms Cheloy E Velicaria-Garafil, Philippines)*

AI as a Strategic Enabler: Transforming Processes, Skills, and Technologies in Parliaments

*(Mr Algirdas Stoncaitis, Lithuania)*

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*(Mr Farid Hajiyeu, Azerbaijan)*

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Preparing for the retirement of long-serving staff

*(Mr Abdulla Mussa, Libya)*

Preparing for the retirement of long-serving staff

*(Mr Jaime Matias, Mozambique)*

Preparing for the retirement of long-serving staff  
(*Mr Pedro Agostinho De Neri, Angola*)

Statement of the Clerk of the National Assembly of The Gambia  
(*Mr Kalipha MM Mbye, The Gambia*)

In the news and innovations at parliament  
(*Mr Ahmed Manna, Egypt*)

**Review of the ASGP / 74<sup>th</sup> year / N° 227 / Geneva, 20 – 22 April 2025**

UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION



ASSOCIATION DES SECRETAIRES  
GENERAUX DES PARLEMENTS

*ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES  
GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS*

## MINUTES OF THE AUTUMN SESSION

**GENEVA (SWITZERLAND)**

**20 to 22 October 2025**



## **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 2025

Geneva 20 to 22 October 2025

### List of attendance

#### MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTES PRESENT

| COUNTRY      | CHAMBER or PARLIAMENT             | NAME and TITLE                      |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Algeria      | National Council                  | Mr Mohamed DADA (SG)                |
| Algeria      | National People's Assembly        | Mr Djalal SALIM (SG)                |
| Angola       | National Assembly                 | Mr Pedro Agostinho DE NERI (SG)     |
| Armenia      | National Assembly                 | Mr Davit ARAKELYAN (SG)             |
| Australia    | House of Representatives          | Ms Claessa SURTEES (SG)             |
| Austria      | Parliament                        | Mr Alexis WINTONIAK (DSG)           |
| Azerbaijan   | Milli Majlis                      | Mr Farid HAJIYEV (SG)               |
| Bahrain      | Shura Council                     | Mrs Kareema ALABBASI (SG)           |
| Bahrain      | Council of Representatives        | Mr Mohammed ALBUAINAIN (SG)         |
| Belgium      | Senate                            | Mr Gert van der BIESEN (SG)         |
| Benin        | National Assembly                 | Mr Mariano Afolabi OGOUTOLOU (SG)   |
| Bhutan       | National Council                  | Mr Tenzin THINLEY (SG)              |
| Botswana     | National Assembly                 | Dr Gabriel Gosiamé G. MALEBANG (SG) |
| Bulgaria     | National Assembly                 | Mrs Stefana KARASLAVOVA (SG)        |
| Burkina Faso | Transitional Legislative Assembly | Mrs Valérie SIMPORÉ SOUBEIGA (SG)   |
| Cambodia     | Senate                            | Mr LAY Samkol (SG)                  |

|                   |                                 |   |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Canada            | House of Commons                | Mr Jean-Philippe BROCHU <b>for</b> Mr Eric JANSE (SG)         |
| Chile             | Chamber of Deputies             | Luis ROJAS GALLARDO (DSG)                                     |
| Chile             | Senate                          | Mr Raul GUZMAN URIBE (SG)                                     |
| Congo (Dem. Rep.) | Senate                          | Mr Jean MUKUALA BATEKE (SG)                                   |
| Congo (Dem. Rep.) | National Assembly               | Mr Jean NGUVULU KHOJI (SG)                                    |
| Djibouti          | National Assembly               | Mr Ismael Goulal BOUDINE (SG)                                 |
| Ecuador           | National Assembly               | Mr Giovanni Francisco BRAVO RODRÍGUEZ (SG)                    |
| Egypt             | House of Representatives        | Mr Ahmed MANNA (SG)   |
| Equatoria. Guinea | Chamber of Deputies             | Mr Bienvenido EKUA ESONO ABE (SG)                             |
| Estonia           | Parliament                      | Mr Antero HABICHT (SG)  |
| Fiji              | Parliament                      | Mrs Jeanette EMBERSON (SG)                                    |
| Finland           | Parliament                      | Mr Mikael KOILLINEN (DSG)                                     |
| France            | Senate                          | Mr Eric TAVERNIER (SG, Presidency)                            |
| Gambia (The)      | National Assembly               | Mr Kalipha MM MBYE (SG)                                       |
| Georgia           | Parliament                      | Mr Kakha OKROJANASHVILI (SG)                                  |
| Germany           | Bundesrat                       | Dr Georg KLEEMANN (DSG)                                       |
| Germany           | Bundestag                       | Mr Paul GÖTTKE (SG)   |
| Iceland           | Parliament                      | Mr Sverrir JÓNSSON (SG)                                       |
| India             | Council of States (Rajya Sabha) | Dr. K. S. Somashekhar <b>for</b> Mr Pramod Chandra MODY (SG)  |
| Iran              | Islamic Parliament              | Mr Alireza Sharifi BARZEGAR (SG)                              |
| Italy             | Chamber of Deputies             | Mrs Maria Teresa CALABRO <b>for</b> Dr Fabrizio CASTALDI (SG) |
| Italy             | Senate                          | Ms Luana IANNETTI <b>for</b> Mr Federico TONIATO (SG)         |
| Japan             | House of Councillors            | Mr Hiroyuki TOGAWA <b>for</b> Mr Fumitake KOBAYASHI (SG)      |
| Kenya             | Senate                          | Mr Jeremiah M. NYEGENYE (SG)                                  |

|                     |                              |  |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Korea (Republic of) | National Assembly            | Mr KIM Minki (SG)  |
| Latvia              | Parliament                   | Ms Lelde RAFELDE (SG)  |
| Lesotho             | National Assembly            | Mr Lebohang Fine MAEMA (SG)  |
| Libya               | House of Representatives     | Mr Abdulla ALMASRI (SG)  |
| Lithuania           | Parliament                   | Mr Algirdas STONČAITIS (SG)  |
| Mongolia            | State Great Khural           | Mr Baasandorj BARSUREN (SG)  |
| Montenegro          | Parliament                   | Mr Boban STANIŠIĆ (SG)   |
| Morocco             | House of Representatives     | Mr Najib EL KHADI (SG)   |
| Morocco             | Chamber of Councillors       | Mr Assad ZEROUALI (SG)   |
| Mozambique          | Assembly of the Republic     | Ms Filomena da Conceição GRACHANE <b>for</b><br>Mr António Joaquim MAHUMANE (SG) |
| Namibia             | National Council             | Mr Tousy NAMISEB (SG)  |
| Namibia             | National Assembly            | Mrs Esther N. KAAPANDA (SG)  |
| Nepal               | National Assembly            | Mr Padma Prasad PANDEY (SG)  |
| Netherlands         | Senate of the States General | Dr Remco NEHMELMAN (SG)  |
| Netherlands         | House of Representatives     | Mr Sander DUIJMAER VAN TWIST (DSG)   |
| Nigeria             | National Assembly            | Mr Kamoru OGUNLANA (SG)  |
| North Macedonia     | Assembly of the Republic     | Ms Marina DIMOVSKA (SG)  |
| Oman                | State Council                | Mr Khalid AL SAADI (SG)  |
| Oman                | Shura Council                | Mr Ahmed Mohammed AL NADABI (SG)   |
| Pakistan            | National Assembly            | Mr Tahir HUSSAIN (SG)  |
| Pakistan            | Senate                       | Mr Hafeez ullah Sheikh <b>for</b> Mr Syed Hasnain<br>HAIDER (SG)                 |
| Philippines         | House of Representatives     | Ms Cheloy VELICARIA-GARAFIL (SG)   |
| Philippines         | House of Representatives     | Mr Jennifer A. BAQUIRAN (DSG)  |
| Poland              | Senate                       | Mrs Ewa POLKOWSKA (SG)   |

|                      |                          |  |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Poland               | Sejm                     | Mr Michal DESKUR <b>for</b> Mr Jacek CICHOCKI (SG)           |
| Portugal             | Assembly of the Republic | Ms Susana MARTINS <b>for</b> Ms Anabela CABRAL FERREIRA (SG) |
| Qatar                | Shura Council            | Mr Hamad AL HAMADI <b>for</b> Mr Nayef AL-MAHMOUD (SG)       |
| Romania              | Senate                   | Ms Arany VIKÁRIUS <b>for</b> Mr Mario Ovidiu OPREA (SG)      |
| Romania              | Chamber of Deputies      | Mrs Ioana BRAN-VOINEA (SG)                                   |
| Rwanda               | Senate                   | Dr Yvonne UMULISA (SG)                                       |
| Saudi Arabia         | Shura Council            | Mr Mohamed ALMUTAIRI (SG)                                    |
| Senegal              | National Assembly        | Mr Amadou THIMBO (SG)  |
| Somalia              | House of the People      | Mr Mohamed Abdullahi ABDI (DSG)                              |
| South Africa         | Parliament               | Mr Xolile GEORGE (SG)  |
| South Africa         | National Assembly        | Mr Masibulele XASO (SG)                                      |
| Suriname             | National Assembly        | Mrs Ruth Lucia DE WINDT (SG)                                 |
| Sweden               | Parliament               | Mr Ingvar MATTSON (SG)                                       |
| Switzerland          | National Council         | Mrs Selina STOLLER <b>for</b> Mr Pierre-Hervé FRELÉCHOZ (SG) |
| Switzerland          | Assemblée nationale      | Mr Philippe SCHWAB (SG)                                      |
| Tanzania             | National Assembly        | Mr Baraka Ildephonc LEONARD (SG)                             |
| Thailand             | Senate                   | Mrs Pannita SATARNTRAIPOPE (SG)                              |
| Thailand             | House of Representatives | Ms Steejit TAIPIBOONSUK (DSG)                                |
| Timor Leste          | National Parliament      | Mr Edgar Sequeira MARTINS (SG)                               |
| Uganda               | Parliament               | Mrs Jane Rose IKIROR (DSG)                                   |
| Ukraine              | Parliament               | Mr Viacheslav STUCHNYI (SG)                                  |
| United Arab Emirates | Federal National Council | Dr Omar AL NUAIMI (SG)                                       |
| United Arab Emirates | Federal National Council | Mrs Afra ALBASTI (DSG)                                       |
| United Kingdom       | House of Lords           | Ms Chloe MAWSON (DSG)  |

|                |                          |   |
|----------------|--------------------------|---|
| United Kingdom | House of Commons         | Ms Sarah DAVIES (DSG)                       |
| Uruguay        | Senate                   | Dr José Pedro MONTERO (SG)                  |
| Uruguay        | House of Representatives | Mr Emiliano METEDIERA (DSG)                 |
| Vietnam        | National Assembly        | Mrs LE Thu Ha (DSG)                         |
| Zimbabwe       | Senate                   | Mr Asha JENJE for Ms Helen B. DINGANI (DSG) |

#### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Arab ASGP   | Mr Jasem ALNUSIF (SG)  |
| East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)                          | Mr Alex OBATRE (SG)    |
| ECOWAS Parliament   | Mr Bertin SOMÉ (SG)    |
| Maghreb Consultative Council                                      | Mr Said MOKADEM (SG)   |
| Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC) | Mrs Boemo SEKGOMA (SG) |

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## FIRST SITTING

Monday 20 October 2025 (morning)

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 11.00AM

### 1. Opening of the session

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, opened the session and warmly welcomed members of the Association and especially new members. He reminded members that, when there is a limited number of seats in the room, priority for seats must be given to Secretary Generals who are members.

### 2. Members

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, 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>Ms Kaniz MOULA</b>                        | Secretary of the Parliament, Bangladesh                               |
| <b>Mr Lucas Ribeiro ALMEIDA JÚNIOR</b>       | Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies, Brazil                  |
| <b>Mr Danilo Augusto BARBOZA DE AGUIAR</b>   | Secretary General of the Senate, Brazil                               |
| <b>Mr Panicos POURGOURIDES</b>               | Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Cyprus             |
| <b>Mr Giovanni Francisco BRAVO RODRÍGUEZ</b> | Secretary General of the National Assembly, Ecuador                   |
| <b>Mr Paul GÖTTKE</b>                        | Secretary General of the Bundestag, Germany                           |
| <b>Mr Martin HUGHES</b>                      | Acting Clerk of the Senate, Republic of Ireland                       |
| <b>Mr Sverrir JÓNSSON</b>                    | Secretary of the Parliament, Iceland                                  |
| <b>Mr Abdelrahim ALWAKED</b>                 | Secretary General of the Senate, Jordan                               |
| <b>Mr Samuel NJOROGE</b>                     | Secretary General of the National Assembly, Kenya                     |
| <b>Mr Algirdas STONČAITIS</b>                | Secretary General of the National Assembly, Lithuania                 |
| <b>Mr Boban STANIŠIĆ</b>                     | Secretary General of the Parliament, Montenegro                       |
| <b>Mr António Joaquim MAHUMANE</b>           | Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic, Mozambique         |
| <b>Mr Emmanuel ODO</b>                       | Acting Clerk of the Senate, Nigeria                                   |
| <b>Mr Sander DUIJMAER VAN TWIST</b>          | Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Netherlands |
| <b>Mr Carlos Ramón ALVARADO</b>              | Secretary General of the National Assembly, Panama                    |
| <b>Ms Cheloy VELICARIA-GARAFIL</b>           | Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Philippines        |
| <b>Mr Jennifer A. BAQUIRAN</b>               | Deputy Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Philippines |
| <b>Mrs Ioana BRAN-VOINEA</b>                 | Acting Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies, Romania          |
| <b>Mr Sirote PATPUN</b>                      | Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Thailand           |
| <b>Mr Hüseyin Kürşat KIRBIYIK</b>            | Secretary General of the Grand National Assembly, Türkiye             |
| <b>Mrs LE Thu Ha</b>                         | Deputy Secretary General of the National Assembly, Vietnam            |

**Mr Emiliano METEDIERA**

Deputy Secretary General of the House of  
Representatives, Uruguay

For associate membership:

**Mr Jean-Baptiste LECLÈRE**

Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of  
francophone countries

The list of new members was approved by the Association.

### **3. Executive Committee elections**

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, recalled that in Tashkent, the Association agreed to open 2 posts of ordinary member to election at this session to proactively replace for Mr Thimbo and Ms Kalemba for whom this will be the sixth and last session on the Executive Committee.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President** informed members that Mr Talip Uzun, elected to the Executive Committee in Tashkent, is no longer the Secretary General of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. Consequently, his position on the Executive Committee now stands vacant. He said the Executive Committee would therefore like to propose that 3 posts as ordinary member be open to election in Geneva.

The Association agreed.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President** resumed the election timetable, as set out on the agenda, for the 3 vacant posts as ordinary member of the Executive Committee.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, explained that the Election Note, sent out by the Joint Secretaries and published on the website, sets out the rules for standing as a candidate and voting in elections. Both nomination and candidacy forms can be requested from the secretariat.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, reminded members of the Association's rules regarding diversity of gender, geographical spread and language (English and French) on the Executive Committee.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, reminded colleagues that under the ASGP rules, members with more than 2 years of unpaid membership fees will have their right to vote suspended by the Executive Committee and cannot stand for election.

#### 4. Orders of the day

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, invited members to review the draft Orders of the Day, which had been approved by the Executive Committee, and were available on the website and via QR codes on screens in the plenary room.

He reminded colleagues of the usual speaking limits and said that they would be strictly enforced:

- **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.

The agenda for the session was agreed to.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President** informed the Association that many members have requested to speak on the first or second day of the agenda. He said that Secretary Generals are very busy people who have many demands on their time. However, it is not possible for everyone to speak on the first day of the conference. Somebody must speak on the third day. He asked the Association to consider this problem when planning their travel.

#### 5. Interpretation

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, 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 several other languages as sponsored by national parliaments. He then thanked the interpreters, who make ASGP meetings possible.

### THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

#### 7. Communication: Mr Raúl Guzmán Uribe, Chilean Senate, on 'Gender Equality Seal: Chilean Senate, first parliament in the world to obtain this international certification'

**Mr Raúl Guzmán Uribe** presented the following communication:

Communication by the Secretary General of the Chilean Senate, Mr. Raúl Guzmán, at the Autumn Session 2025 of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

Allow me to present, at this autumn 2025 session of the Association of General Secretaries of Parliaments, the accomplishment of a historic milestone for the Senate of the Republic of Chile: the recognition to our corporation with the Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions, awarded by the United Nations Development Programme. With this certification, the Chilean Senate becomes the first legislative chamber in the world to receive this seal of excellence.

The Gender Equality Seal is a global initiative of the United Nations Development Programme that highlights public institutions committed to inclusivity and whose political and institutional objectives include promoting working environments where women and men have equal opportunities in the context of their working experience. In concrete terms, this results in stimulating excellence in gender equality, in all aspects of their working performance.

The Gender Equality Seal measures progress by using international standards. During the certification process, institutions receive support at every step, with innovative tools and personalised guidance from international experts. Once the programme is complete, the participating public institution receives international recognition in Gender Equality, which attests its achievements. The Seal is also a recognition of effectiveness and innovation in gender equality.

So, in November 2022, the Senate of the Republic of Chile signed a collaboration agreement with the UNDP to implement the Gender Equality Seal Programme in Public Institutions.

After two years of internal work, and following an external evaluation process carried out by the UNDP, the respective certification was issued, and as we mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, the Senate of the Republic of Chile has become the first legislative chamber in the world to obtain it.

Upon completion of the UNDP certification process, 15 significant institutional advances and achievements developed by our corporation in the area of gender equality were recognised. I would like to briefly outline those attainments:

1. Preparation of an institutional gender assessment to determine the current situation at the institutional level, in this area.
2. Structuring the 2024–2028 Institutional Strategic Plan, carried out with a gender focus.
3. Definition of an Institutional Gender Policy, consisting in the development of a set of principles and objectives adopted by the Senate to promote gender equality.

4. Creation of the Gender Committee and a Technical Secretariat, which are democratic participatory bodies and functional structures that promote and coordinate work on gender mainstreaming in the Senate.
5. Technical guidance manual for including gender perspective in legislative work at all stages of the law-making process.
6. Training and capacity building in gender matters for Senate officials, since 2022.
7. Leadership programme for female officials, including workshops on talent management and skills development, to mobilise ideas and projects, as well as to expand opportunities for them.
8. Drafting of protocols to prevent and punish workplace harassment, sexual harassment, workplace violence and arbitrary discrimination.
9. Integration of gender criteria into the evaluation stage of public procurement.
10. Design of a banner on the institutional website with legislative and institutional information on gender issues.
11. Since 2023, the Senate set up a Breastfeeding Room, which is designed as a space specifically implemented to promote breastfeeding, helping to reconcile working duties and motherhood.
12. Design of a manual on inclusive and non-sexist language, intended as a tool providing recommendations for the use of respectful and equitable language in Senate communications.
13. Coordination with other national and international organisations.
14. Implementation of a monitoring: system endowed with indicators and methodologies for a budget with gender perspective.
15. Launch of "Women in the National Congress Workshop", a citizen engagement programme that aims to highlight the role of women in the country's political history.

Allow me to illustrate with figures, just one piece of data that shows the significant progress made during the certification process and since the current Institutional Strategic Plan came into force: the gap in the representation of female employees within the Senate has been reduced from 30% to 35%, and in addition, 41% of management positions are now held by women.

We are justifiably proud of this international recognition, but it also encourages us to persevere in the full implementation of our Institutional Strategic Plan, promoting actions that contribute to ensuring equitable and discrimination-free workplaces. Thank you very much.

**Mr Ingvar Mattson, Sweden**, asked about the diagnosis of problems which led to the measures taken. He asked whether there are still problems Chile is tackling which they identified in the diagnosis or if all is complete.

**Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia**, noted the committee established to identify areas for improvement. Asked whether the committee, or some other mechanism, would continue to make progressive improvements to the environment?

**Ms Chloe Mawson, UK**, noted that protocols had been introduced in the Chilean parliament to prevent workplace sexual harassment. She enquired whether the protocols solely concerned sexual harassment between staff, or also cover harassment between staff and Members?

**Mr Ismael Goulal BOUDINE Djibouti**, asked about the role of the Senate and to what extent are the legislative powers or executive powers used in the process.

**Mr Said Mokadem, Maghreb Consultative Council**, asked what is the place of Chilean women in the Chilean constitution?

**Mr Guzman, Chile**, responded that there were many gaps in equalities between women and men within the institution in terms of managements and internal relationships, with certain situations more difficult for women. He said one example, is the creation of a breast-feeding space to help reconcile work and motherhood for women.

In the first evaluation undertaken by UNDP, Chile had only reached 22% of standards for the gender seal but when they finished the process, Chile met 88% of standard. He said the work looked at all civil servants, women and men, who took part in surveys and then the final review.

He said there were a number of challenges and some of the objectives were only possible to achieve over time. For example, better awareness of women's role in

public service and the value they can bring to these roles. He then referred to a slide on paid work and unpaid work which highlighted that women work 12 hours more than the standard week due to different roles played by women and men outside the workplace.



## 8. Communication: Mr Najib El Khadi, House of Representatives of Morocco, 'Promoting parliamentary culture among young people: simulation of parliamentary debates'

**Mr Najib El Khadi**, presented the following communication:

Honorable President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, the distinguished Secretaries-General, esteemed  
Colleagues,

I am honored to take the floor today before such a great audience; to share an experience that reflects the commitment of the Moroccan Parliament in favor of youth, a question that concerns us all : How to bring our institutions closer to the citizens of tomorrow, and enshrine, since an early age, the values of democratic culture.

For the second year in a row, the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco, with its two Houses, has chosen to provide a concrete and groundbreaking response to this challenge. Building on the success of the previous edition, the Parliament has renewed and boosted its innovative and inclusive pedagogical initiative through the organization of mock parliamentary debates for youth, which were a highlight of the 30th edition of the International Book and Publishing Fair, organized in Rabat in April 2025.

Being a hub of ideas and cultures, the International Book and Publishing Fair of Rabat is not just a mere event but a platform of rich exchange and dialogue. The 2025 edition set new records of attendance, with more than 403,000 visitors, meaning a significant increase of 26% in comparison to last year. The Fair goes beyond the exhibition of works to offer a unique platform for national institutions, enabling them to unveil their rich intellectual and documentary production, present their publications, and engage with the public in a direct dialogue on their missions and proceedings.

For the fourth consecutive year, the participation of the Moroccan Parliament in the Fair proves to be a milestone in its openness policy. This presence aims to

transform our pavilion into a true bridge for communication with citizens, particularly youth; the objective being to offer the general public a special occasion to familiarize themselves with the inner workings of the legislative institution, highlight its functioning, and measure its essential contribution to the Morocco's democratic and social development.

#### An In-depth Preparation

This project is not a one-time event. It is the culmination of a progressive and meticulous preparation process, conducted in strategic partnership with the Ministry of National Education.

The first step was tapping into our actual proceedings by thoughtfully selecting the themes from the minutes of plenary sittings, particularly the ones dedicated to the oral questions addressed to the Government. This dense content was later the subject of true pedagogical engineering aimed at producing a clear and accessible scripts, while preserving the authenticity of parliamentary proceedings.

The scripts were then disseminated ahead of the Fair in order to enable each participant to assimilate their role, whether being the chair of the sitting, a minister, or parliamentarian, and embrace the codes of parliamentary language and posture. This preparation was reinforced by the organization of a vast campaign of training workshops across the twelve regions of the Kingdom. In this vein, officials of the Parliament and the Ministry travelled to each region in order to ensure a direct initiation of the participating young people to the procedures and ethics of parliamentary debate.

To conclude this immersion, the concerned young people benefitted from visits to the headquarters of the Parliament, with a view to helping them absorb the solemnity and symbolic significance of the institution they will soon be representing.

#### Realistic, Lively, and Inclusive Sittings

In order to host this unique democratic exercise, a replica of the plenary hall was installed at the heart of the pavilion of the Parliament during the Rabat Book Fair. The atmosphere was authentic to that of a real plenary sitting where the debates discussed major national priorities: water management, digital transition, in addition to structural projects like the Dakhla Atlantic Seaport.

Realism was driven to the minutest detail as the participating young people embodied all their institutional roles: chair of the sitting, clerks, ministers, as well as parliamentarians from the Majority and the Opposition. Each participant had clocked speaking time and the “ministers” took the stand to respond to the questions following the set protocol. The participants followed the plan of oral questions and the play of responses and replies to the point, thus giving

the debates an authentic dynamic. In order to guarantee a total immersion, the sittings were filmed and broadcast live on big screens, which enabled the public to attend as real audience.

However, realism is nothing without openness. In this aspect, the exercise respected the linguistic diversity of the Parliament, as when a question was raised in Amazighe, the second official national language, simultaneous translation into Arabic was provided. Inclusion was pushed to its farthest limits by introducing a major innovation through providing live interpretation to sign language. This initiative enabled the young people with hearing impairment to fully participate and play the role of parliamentarians. This measure, which was lauded unanimously, has proven that no barrier can stand in the way of citizen engagement.

An outstanding fact was the attendance of ministers from the government in office to these mock sittings to give their support and encouragement to the young participants debating themes that they have previously addressed in the Parliament. This bridge between generations and branches represented a moment of exceptional approval. Upon the end of the mock sittings, and in order to enshrine this experience lastingly in the civic memory, the participants received souvenirs and pedagogical gifts as tokens for their passage in this citizen Parliament.

#### Positive Feedback and Profound Impact

The initiative met with great success and attracted a remarkably diversified public composed of families, students, teachers, as well as university professors, journalists, and civil society actors. This tapestry was enriched by the presence of active Moroccan parliamentarians who participated not only as observers, but also took the initiative of discussing with the young participants and encouraging them. Their interaction stood as a true intergenerational bridge that offered a direct contact with the representatives of the nation. Besides, the presence of foreign delegations also attested to the international interest for this Moroccan model of disseminating parliamentary culture.

The media impact was just as exceptional, covering three complementary levels. In this regard, the national press commended the pedagogical and citizen scope of the initiative. For their part, electronic media captured the human vibrancy of the event by conveying the enthusiasm of the participants, while social media ensured the broadcast of the event for younger categories thanks to short and dynamic content formats that amplified the reach of the message.

Aside from figures and media coverage, the biggest achievement is that of the feedback received on the spot, as the visitors, students, and representatives of civil society unanimously praised this foundational experience. They also insisted on the

value of this immersion in the heart of democracy, which enables young people to grasp the importance of respecting the rules, debate discipline, and the richness of pluralism.

#### Towards Experience Sharing

Drawing on this dynamic, the Moroccan experience is not an end in itself, but the start of continuous engagement. In this respect, the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco remains committed to expand this measure at the national level and to share it widely among our international parliamentary community.

Conclusion Esteemed colleagues,

Granting young people the opportunity to experience the parliamentary business from within not only enriches their civic culture, but also prepares a generation that is aware of its rights, duties, and its vital role in the democratic debate.

Our Parliaments are not only decision-making spaces. They must become real, vivid pedagogical venues that are open to society and where active citizenship and intergenerational dialogue are built.

By opening our doors, we not only shape the citizens of tomorrow, but we also inject our institutions with fresh liveliness.

Thank you for your kind attention.

**Ms Sarah Davies, UK**, asked whether there is something special about holding the event in a different space to the Chamber, in a more neutral space, a more curious space. She noted that some young people who participate in a similar activity in the UK are quite intimidated by being in the House of Commons Chamber. She remarked that the idea of holding this event in a different space, whether this changes who is willing to come and speak at the event.

**Mr Luis Jojas Gallardo, Chile**, noted that Chile also has a Youth parliament where young people come to the National Congress. He remarked some of the Youth Parliament became full members. He said it was complimentary for it to take place in two spaces, the sombre chamber and a more informal environment. He said students really value the experience of being on site and seeing how things work in parliament.

**Mr Paul Gottke, Germany**, said Germany has a similar programme for young people with a simulation of a debate. They faced a new experience in the recent youth parliament, they said there is increasing polarisation in the young people's debate between hard left and hard right issues.

**Mr Najib El Khadi, Morocco**, said that in Morocco there is a new parliament, which meets regularly, this initiative is overseen by an independent institution, the

Observatory of Childhood. The experiment organised at the National Book Fair is an additional or supporting initiative to take an opportunity to get out into the public and reach out to young people.

We all live in a similar world, face similar challenges; mistrust, disengagement, fake news. He said people ask what the purpose of parliament is, they have issues with democratic culture because they live in a virtual world. Civic education represents a worldwide challenge. He said they worked with the Ministry of Education to bring boys and girls from a range of regions together. Generally, students from regions closer to the capital, as students further away were less able to fund travel.

In response to Germany, he said the key psychological and pedagogical point is to give them the opportunity to experience a parliamentary session, play the role of a speaker, ask a question, play the role of a party leader. He said social media is a big issue and a wider conversation. He said the key thing is taking parliament outside of its 4 walls, it is a small experiment, that sits alongside other outreach activities. There is no magic wand or silver bullet for these issues, this is just 1 option in a permanent work.



## 9. Communication: Ms Chloe Mawson, UK House of Lords and Ms Sarah Davies, UK House of Commons, on 'Recent developments in the relationship between UK Parliament and the Courts'

**Ms Chloe Mawson and Ms Sarah Davies** presented the following communication:

### **Introduction**

To begin this paper with important points of context for comparison with other constitutional systems, it is worth noting that the UK has **no codified constitution** and in the UK Parliament there is **no notion of individual immunity of Members or staff**. Parliament is, as former Clerk Bill McKay put it, “not a haven” from the criminal or civil law; it has long been the position that privilege does not protect Members from prosecution for “ordinary crimes”.

Instead, the protection for Parliament rests on “privilege”, that is, protection of matters which are inherently for Parliament, such as how it arranges its proceedings, and how it controls such things as access to the precincts, and protection for free speech in Parliament. That means that there is no clear boundary between matters for the court and matters for each House – while this has the

advantage of enabling privilege to adapt to modern circumstances it also means that there can be contested territory. In principle there are areas where the courts should not trespass, such as the detail of parliamentary decision making, and which are not justiciable. In practice, as legal understanding of Parliament is limited that is not always appreciated.

Some of this is expressed by two historic statutory provisions - **Article IX of the Bill of Rights 1689** and the **Parliamentary Papers Act 1840** - followed by a line of court judgements to iterate the meaning applied to them by judges, including how to define such terms as “*proceedings*”, “*in Parliament*” and so on in a changed world. Article IX of the Bill of Rights 1689 confers on “proceedings in Parliament” protection from being “impeached or questioned” in any “court or place out of Parliament”. This built on a pre-existing claim to exclusive cognisance over things said or done in Parliament.

Most of the early cases about Parliament focussed on the need for Parliament to be able to function unfettered, and the importance of courts and Parliament respecting their respective constitutional roles. It was complicated by the fact that there are of course two Houses, and from the seventeenth century onwards the House of Lords was developing a function as the de facto Supreme Court – a development which was resented and resisted by the Commons, in part because it would put the Lords in the position of determining the Commons’s privileges.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the following principles emerged: parliamentary privilege exists and is exercisable by each House; each House has control over its own procedures and proceedings; the courts determine the boundaries; and the remedy for disagreement would be legislation.

The UK Parliament operates a parallel self-denying ordinance over commentary on matters before the courts through its **sub judice resolution**, which is identical in both Houses.

The balance between these claims is covered in detail in the latest edition of Erskine May which is currently being extensively edited for a new edition in 2026. Iteration both by the courts and in Parliament continues: while there remains legislation relating to privilege, this is piecemeal and relates to particular issues.

The two Houses rely on the courts being astute to identify and respect appropriate constitutional boundaries. The House authorities intervene as necessary, or communicate informally with the parties in the case, to set out where the Parliamentary authorities consider those boundaries lie.

This paper sets out developments since the beginning of 2025 by summarising:

- a judgement at the European Court of Human Rights delivered in April 2025, which reaffirmed the UK Parliament view of the protections given to Members of both Houses when making speeches in their respective proceedings.
- two referrals to the House of Commons Privileges Committee
- a particularly relevant court case, relating to a legal claim against the Government's introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) on private school fees

This is followed by a summary of the House of Commons Procedure Committee's inquiry into the sub judice resolution and a review of work underway to raise awareness of parliamentary privilege among the legal community.

### **Part one: April 2025 European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judgement**

This case shows the continued importance placed on free speech in Parliament and access to information. The ECHR ruled in April 2025 that the retailer Sir Philip Green's human rights were not breached when he was named during proceedings by a member of the House of Lords as the holder of an injunction against the Telegraph newspaper. It was an interim injunction and was due to go to a full hearing not long after Green was named – the legal proceedings were therefore within the scope of the House of Lords sub judice resolution.

The ECHR concluded that, although Article 8 (protection of private and family life) was engaged in this case, there was no obligation on Parliament to provide any remedy for the interference with Philip Green's Article 8 rights. The full judgement is available here [[Green v. the United Kingdom](#)]. It is long but of particular interest is the following excerpt which recognises the work undertaken by parliament to keep privilege under review:

“In keeping with the well-established constitutional principle of the autonomy of parliament...it is in the first instance for national parliaments to assess the need to restrict conduct by their members...As the United Kingdom parliament is aware of the problem of parliamentary privilege being used to frustrate injunctions and has addressed the need for further controls...the court considers that for the time being it may be left to the respondent state, and parliament in particular, to determine whether and to what extent ex ante and ex post controls might be necessary to prevent its members from revealing information subject to privacy injunctions.

However, given the serious impact that the disclosure of such information may have on the privacy of the individual concerned, not to mention the implications for the rule of law and the separation of powers within the United Kingdom constitution of parliamentarians usurping the role of judges who have considered it necessary, after viewing the evidence before them, to grant an injunction, the court

considers that the need for appropriate controls must be kept under regular review at the domestic level.

Consequently, as things currently stand the rule on parliamentary privilege did not exceed the margin of appreciation afforded to the respondent state and there exist no sufficiently strong reasons to justify the court substituting its view for that of parliament and requiring it or the respondent State to introduce further ex ante and ex post controls on freedom of speech in Parliament.

Accordingly, the court concludes that there has been no violation of Article 8 of the convention.”

### **Part two: references to the Committee of Privileges**

The summer of 2025 saw two references of matters to the House of Commons Committee of Privileges, which will be considered this autumn.

#### **Reference one: access to unreported evidence**

The first reference involves potential access by a statutory public inquiry (the Omagh Bombing Inquiry) to unreported evidence taken by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. Article IX prohibits impeaching and questioning, as already noted, and there is no access given to anyone to such unreported evidence from a previous Parliament. A statutory inquiry is, in the view of the Parliamentary authorities, “a place out of Parliament” in the terms of the 1689 Act, and so granting such access was not possible without further consideration. A reference route was therefore devised, and on 9 July 2025 Tonia Antoniazzi MP, Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, presented a petition from the Secretary to the Omagh Bombing Inquiry asking for access to the unreported evidence. Mr Speaker made a statement the following day giving the background:

*I have also received a letter from the hon Member for the Gower and the hon Member for North Dorset asking that this matter be given precedence as a matter of privilege on the grounds that “We suggest that the House should be given an opportunity to consider that petition, but that it is profoundly unsatisfactory for it to have to make a decision without any ability for any Members to assess the propriety of releasing the evidence or of the privilege issues which may be raised by referring such material to a statutory inquiry which we understand is a “place out of Parliament” for the purposes of Article 9 of the Bill of Rights”.*

*I have considered the issue, and I have decided that this is a matter that I should allow the precedence accorded to issues of privilege. The hon. Members may therefore table a motion to be debated on Monday. The motion will be taken after any urgent questions or statements and before Government business. The motion*

*will be available to Members once it has been tabled, which will be before the rise of the House today.*

On 14 July, after a short debate, the House resolved:

- (1) the transcript of unreported oral evidence taken from Mr Baxter by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in private session on 11 November 2009 be referred to the Committee of Privileges;
- (2) the Committee consider the petition from the Secretary to the Omagh Bombing inquiry in relation to that evidence and take any advice it considers necessary;
- (3) the Committee's powers, including the power to report and publish evidence if it considers it appropriate to do so, shall apply in respect of that evidence;
- (4) the Committee report to the House on the actions it has taken and any other matters it considers relevant by 30 October 2025; and
- (5) if the Committee considers the evidence should remain unreported, the Committee's report should include a recommendation on the desirability or otherwise of the release of the evidence to the Omagh Bombing Inquiry.

This followed extensive discussion between the inquiry team and relevant officials, and was essentially an agreed mechanism to enable the question of whether the transcript should be provided to be considered with due regard to the wider privilege implications. The Committee will deliberate on the matter this autumn.

### **Reference two: the Charity Commission**

This is a different kind of case, and is also live, so comment on it at this stage is limited.

The facts as they stand are as follows.

The Charity Commission (the UK charity regulatory body) has initiated legal action against the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). This arises from an earlier PHSO finding that the Charity Commission had committed maladministration in its handling of two separate complaints and should review the matter. The reviews are now completed and the PHSO is of the opinion that they do not remedy the maladministration. The Charity Commission has begun a judicial review inviting the courts to hold that the PHSO has no rational basis for coming to the conclusion she does and therefore that the report is unlawful (and consequently should not be made and laid).

The House authorities sought to intervene given their view that parliamentary privilege was a fundamental bar to this claim because of the close connection between the PHSO and the House. The Charity Commission declined to withdraw

its claim, which caused considerable concern to the Chair of the Public Affairs and Constitutional Affairs Committee, which oversees the PHSO. Accordingly, on 4 September, the Chair of that Committee was given precedence to move the following motion in the House as a matter of privilege:

*That—*

*(1) There be laid before this House the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration proposed to be laid under section 10(3) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 concerning the steps taken by the Charity Commission to implement recommendations contained in two reports issued by the Commissioner in respect of “Miss A” and “Mr U”;*

*(2) The matter of the actions of the Charity Commission in bringing legal proceedings that would prevent the laying of a report before this House be referred to the Committee of Privileges.*

The motion was agreed to after a short debate and the Committee of Privileges will consider the matter this autumn.

### **Part three: the Independent Schools Council legal action over the imposition of Value Added Tax (VAT) on private school fees**

This case formed part of various challenges against the Government’s introduction of VAT on private school fees from January 2025, and came in two parts. The claimants had originally sought to challenge the House of Commons Budget Resolution, given statutory effect under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968 (“the Budget Resolution”). In this case the Speaker of the House of Commons was joined as an Interested Party and submitted that the Budget Resolution was non-justiciable during the time that the Finance Bill (“the Bill”) was proceeding through Parliament.

In light of the Bill having received Royal Assent on 20 March 2025 and being enacted as the Finance Act 2025, the claimants amended their claims to challenge the Finance Act, and the claim against the Budget resolution became academic. It was a matter of concern to the House authorities that first of all the court would entertain the claim before the Act had been passed and second that this challenge only came to light relatively late in the day. This in itself reveals a lack of understanding of privilege by the lawyers concerned. The House authorities have at least put on record in the judgment that it is their view the initial proceedings were premature.

Once the first issue was disposed of a second issue then arose about the use of Committee and National Audit Office reports. With regard to the **use of Committee reports**, the claimants were seeking to rely on factual findings

contained in two parliamentary committee reports, on matters which were not agreed by other parties (such as the defendants). Similar submissions were made in respect of **National Audit Office value for money reports**, which are considered by the parliamentary authorities to be proceedings in Parliament for the purposes of Article IX given their close association with the constitutional role of the House of Commons in authorising and scrutinising Government expenditure, their close link to the work of the Committee of Public Accounts, and the control exercised by the House of Commons over the Comptroller and Auditor General (“C&AG”) and the NAO.

Use of such material was the subject of consideration in the courts during the *Heathrow Hub* case in 2020. The relevant judgement by the Court of Appeal set out this classification of the permitted use of parliamentary proceedings in court:

- undisputed use of historical fact
- consideration of compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights
- statutory construction
- ensuring that statutory requirements have been met
- establishing the views of Parliament on the scope and effect of parliamentary privilege
- use of ministerial statements in judicial review proceedings (where the court agreed with Speaker’s Counsel that the determination by a court of the meaning of such statements ‘at least where there is a dispute as to meaning’ risks the court being drawn into forbidden territory)

**The Houses’ submission to the court was that if the findings of these reports are contested they should not be admissible - and this was agreed to by the court.** From the Houses’ perspective, though, while the outcome of the case respected the House’s view on the use of this material, aspects of how the case were conducted – particularly the late involvement of Parliament on key issues, were concerning, and led to the work with the Government Legal Department outlined in the final section of this paper.

## **Work for the autumn**

### **Sub judice inquiry**

The House of Commons Procedure Committee launched its inquiry into sub judice earlier this year, with terms of reference covering the following five areas:

- Operability of the sub judice resolution
- Evolution of UK politics and constitution since 2001
- Legal developments since 2001
- Changing media landscape since 2001

- International comparison

The evidence submitted by the House of Commons administration is available here: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/147952/pdf/>

In the UK Parliament the two Houses try to coordinate in all their resolutions and guidance pertaining to the relationship between the two Houses and the Courts. While this is a House of Commons only inquiry it has been recognised that any recommendations arising from it will need to be considered by both Houses before decisions are taken, to ensure that the approaches of the two Houses are consistent.

### **Further work with the Government Legal Department and parliamentary clerks**

As a result of concerns within Parliament about the increasing number of cases in which privilege issues were being raised with the two Houses at a late stage a meeting was arranged with government lawyers, and actions to be taken as a result of that include:

- better arrangements for information sharing
- improved guidance, including material alerting court users to parliamentary privilege
- more training and improved induction for government lawyers
- more work through Parliamentary clerks – the civil servants in each Department who are responsible for relations with Parliament
- (possibly) even a privilege “warning” on select committee reports e.g. “subject to parliamentary privilege” to highlight that these reports cannot be relied on in litigation.

**Mr Kalipha MM Mbye, Gambia**, asked to what extent is parliament disallowed to discuss issues before the courts. He said in The Gambia sometimes things are being investigated by parliament and then go to the courts. Where is the line?

**Mr Jean Philippe Brochu, Canada**, said that in Canada parliamentary privilege is protected by the constitution. He said it is common for members of the public to bring forward cases in the lower courts, who have very little understanding of privilege. He enquired whether the ECHR had knowledge about UK parliamentary privilege?

**Mr Eric Tavernier, France**, asked whether UK has the same difficulty as the Senate, where there exists legislation which permits individuals to have a ‘right of response’ to comments in the press. He said more and more citizens use this right

of response against things said in the assembly. The formal report of the debate in the Senate is what they demand a 'right of response' to. The law, created at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, said such documents don't have a right of response. However, now the documents are online, this is a different case and the courts will try the issue shortly. He asked if the UK have the same issue?

**Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland**, asked how the UK parliament pleaded its case at the ECHR, what was the process?

**Ms Sarah Davies, UK** responded to The Gambia that there are certain exceptions to the sub judice rules. The first one is that when the House is legislating the Sub Judice rule does not apply. When there is a disagreement between the courts and parliament, it is decided by legislation. If necessary, the Speaker can agree to grant a waiver from the Sub Judice resolution if they judge the matter is of national importance. A big court case, which MPs want to discuss, may get a waiver. She said there is often very detailed decisions and long discussions. The key criteria are how debate will affect the case. With a jury, live evidence, you would not want a case to get abandoned due to discussion in parliament., Whereas an appeal in front of a judge in the Supreme Court, might be assessed differently in terms of a waiver.

**Ms Chloe Mawson, UK**, responding to Canada said she recognises the issue of cases starting in lower courts with less understanding of privilege. In the UK, they have the same problem. She recently found out, the night before, of a regional court deciding on whether to block a select committee report and clerks had 8 hours to explain why the court could not block a committee from publishing.

She said the ECHR has heard other cases on UK issues relating to privilege so there is past case law. Also, there is a similar system with applicable case law (in particular a Hungarian case). Although the case was against the Government, parliament worked very closely with government lawyers to draft submissions about parliament. The ECHR came back several times for more information, working through lawyers. She concluded there is now reasonably established case law in the ECHR for this purpose.

**Ms Sarah Davies, UK**, noted the case of A v UK in response to France. This case concerned a 'neighbour from hell' where an MP had named a particular person. The individual took the case to the ECHR. She said the 1840 Parliamentary Papers Act established the principle that parliamentary papers are protected by privilege and a growing body of case law looks at different types of documents. If it is a proceeding, on the website, it is covered. However, a MP can say things in the Chamber or a Committee and they will be protected but if they repeat this outside

they can be subject to right of response and other legal issues. The Sub Judice rule applies in committees and the Speaker can waive Sub Judice for committee discussion, in addition to the Chamber.



## 10. Concluding remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, thanked all the speakers. He closed the sitting, he reminded colleagues that the next sitting of the Association would start at 2.30 this afternoon.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.35PM.

# SECOND SITTING

Monday 20 October 2025 (afternoon)

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 14.40PM

## 1. Introductory remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, warmly welcomed members of the Association.

## 2. Presentation on recent projects undertaken by the IPU, Ms Kareen Jabre

The presentation given by Ms Kareen Jabre is available online here: [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

### GENERAL DEBATE: WHAT MEASURES HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE TO MITIGATE THE RISK OF A FUTURE EVENT PREVENTING YOUR PARLIAMENT FROM SITTING?

**Ms Chloe Mawson, UK**, opened the general debate:

She began by asking participants to identify which types of risks were considered priorities within their parliaments.

She went on to explain that, in the United Kingdom, the principle of parliamentary business continuity had evolved significantly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She emphasised, however, that the risks to which the British Parliament was exposed were not limited solely to health issues. Due to the age of its infrastructure, the institution must also contend with specific threats such as fire or flooding. To this end, a fallback building has been designated for holding sessions should the main site become unusable. She also noted Parliament's heavy reliance on digital tools, which makes the risk of a cyberattack particularly high. In this regard, she felt it would be worthwhile to discuss the solutions implemented by different parliaments to guard against this type of risk.

She then asked whether parliaments had a structure or a person specifically responsible for risk management. In the UK, this task is carried out by a bicameral

resilience team, responsible for anticipating risks, organising regular exercises and learning lessons from incidents.

Finally, she explained that various crisis scenarios were regularly tested. Once a year, a drill is organised to demonstrate how the fallback building operates. Fire drills are also held, as well as a large-scale exercise scheduled for the weekend, in collaboration with the emergency services.

She concluded by inviting participants to share their experiences of parliamentary risk management.

- What should parliaments publish on social media (work related to parliamentary activity, international activity, etc.)?
- What types of risks (institutional, human, technological, etc.) are currently considered a priority within your parliament?
- What measures or procedures have been implemented to prevent or manage these risks?
- Has your parliament designated a specific body or individual responsible for risk management?
- What good practices have emerged from recent risk-mitigation situations within your parliament?

**Ms LE Thu Ha, Vietnam**, said recent experiences from the covid-19 disaster have underscored the importance of preparedness to deal with extraordinary situations. Vietnam has identified 7 categories of risk to legislative functioning; procedural, cyber, human, public health, emergency and natural disaster. On lessons from experience, she mentioned Vietnam's ability to adapt to the pandemic conditions. Health and Safety. National Assembly implemented strategy, electronic voting, virtual committee meetings, Office of National Assembly.

**Mr Edgar SEQUEIRA MARTINS, Timor-Leste**, stated that the National Parliament of Timor-Leste had identified four main categories of risks requiring particular attention. The first concerns institutional and political risks, notably the erosion of the Parliament's legitimacy, the fragility of the State's regulatory capacity, and economic dependence on natural resources. The second category covers human and social risks, linked in particular to persistent poverty, inequalities in access to healthcare, education and employment, as well as issues relating to human rights and the protection of vulnerable groups. The third category concerns technological risks, including inequalities in digital access, disinformation and cyberattacks. Finally, the fourth category concerns external and environmental risks,

such as the effects of climate change, health crises and international economic shocks.

He outlined several measures implemented by the Parliament of Timor-Leste to guard against the identified risks. Finally, he noted that the Parliament was paying particular attention to the fight against disinformation.

**Ms Marina DIMOVSKA, North Macedonia** pointed out that in North Macedonia, the Constitution stipulates that the Assembly is always in session, which means that sittings can be convened at any time. This flexibility is accompanied by structured risk management mechanisms.

She noted that, as in many other parliaments, several categories of risk had been identified, including health emergencies, security threats and situations of a state of emergency or war. She explained that security was currently provided by officers from the Ministry of the Interior, but that the creation of an independent parliamentary security service was under consideration.

She also noted that the Assembly had adopted its first risk management strategy in 2018. As part of this, indicators had been defined and risk management officers appointed within the institution, tasked with producing reports and making recommendations.

Finally, she explained that a risk register was being drawn up to ensure comprehensive coverage of potential vulnerabilities and that investments had been made, particularly in the area of cybersecurity.

She concluded by emphasising that recent experience had confirmed the Assembly's ability to adapt and the need to maintain a dynamic risk management approach in order to ensure the continuity of parliamentary functions.

**Dr K S SOMASHEKHAR, India**, noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had posed a major challenge to the functioning of democratic institutions, including the Indian Parliament, and that many lessons had been learnt from this period to ensure the continuity of parliamentary work in the event of future crises.

He began by highlighting the progress made in the digital sphere. MPs now have high-speed internet connections and access to digital platforms, facilitating remote working. Cybersecurity has also been improved.

Modifications have been made within Parliament to allow for greater physical distancing and to ensure that meetings can continue in the event of a health emergency. Advanced surveillance and detection systems have also been installed

to improve evacuation procedures and enhance security at the parliamentary complex.

Finally, visitor access is now better controlled. Each MP may host up to five visitors per day, with a maximum of two at any one time. Visitors must register via an internal app, receive a code via text message, and undergo verification upon arrival.

He concluded by emphasising that these various measures had strengthened the resilience of the Indian Parliament and were designed to enable legislative work to continue uninterrupted, even in the event of a crisis.

**Mr Pedro AGOSTINHO DE NERI, Angola,** stated that the Angolan Parliament's approach was similar to that presented by other speakers.

He mentioned the organisation of simulations designed to prepare the Parliament for various types of crises, including fires, health threats and cyberattacks, the latter having been tested using artificial intelligence tools.

He added that the infrastructure had been modernised through the integration of cutting-edge technologies to enhance the institution's efficiency and resilience.

**Mr Abdullah ALMASRI, Libya,** stated that contingency plans and coordination and communication mechanisms had been put in place to ensure a rapid response in the event of an incident. Training programmes have been developed for staff, particularly in the areas of information security, data management and confidentiality.

Measures have also been taken to strengthen cybersecurity and regulate the use of technology, as well as to develop a legislative framework relating to cybercrime. A specialist department responsible for risk management has been established, comprising a risk analysis and assessment unit.

Finally, a compendium of best practices in occupational health and safety has been compiled.

**Mr Eric TAVERNIER, France,** made the following remarks:

Low-impact risks that could affect the smooth running of public sittings are mapped and addressed through specific procedures

- The Sittings Directorate maps risks that could affect the conduct of public sittings and produces a document ("SOS Chair") listing the procedures to be followed for each type of incident:

- Security or safety risks: disruption in the galleries, intrusion, fire;
- People-related risks: fainting, falls;
- Material risks such as electrical or computer failures;
- Malfunctions of the electronic voting system.

→ For each type of incident, a sheet lists the actions to be taken, the people who need to intervene and the statements that the chairperson must make. Several

- Exercises simulating computer failures or serious incidents in the chamber are carried out times a year to test emergency procedures. These involve officials from the relevant directorates and may involve external institutions such as the emergency services (Emergency Medical Services, fire brigade)
- The Sitings Directorate has set up an internal control unit coordinated by three officials; it is responsible for identifying risks affecting the directorate, developing prevention measures and procedures, coordinating exercises and interacting with other directorates.

Measures are also taken to anticipate and overcome the occurrence of serious events that could compromise the activity of the Senate, particularly the public sitting

- Planning for situations in which the chamber and the Palais du Luxembourg are inaccessible: if the chamber is unavailable for a short period, another meeting room could host the public sittings. Possibilities for the Senate to meet in other locations have also been explored; the Palace of Versailles, which houses the Congress Chamber (where the entire Parliament meets, especially for votes on constitutional amendments), could be used for Senate meetings.
- Developing a business continuity plan: this year, all directorates carried out an assessment to identify which activities are necessary for the continuity of the Senate's "critical" constitutional missions, as well as the resources needed to maintain or restore them in the event of a major interruption. This business continuity plan (BCP) should make it possible to define and formalize the procedures to implement and provide communication tools for parliamentarians and staff in the event of an interruption of activities, particularly if the Palais du Luxembourg becomes inaccessible. 2 o Regarding the Sitings Directorate, the effects of a five-day interruption of public sitting activities were studied, as well as, in case of disruption to the Senate's normal operations, the modalities for continuing certain critical activities related to the public sittings, alongside the reduction or suspension of less essential activities. The number of officials required to maintain essential functions linked to public sittings needed was also identified.

Finally, the COVID-19 epidemic, which required significant adjustments to the Senate's activities in order to comply with health regulations, helped to develop practices and procedures that can be used in the future.

- The Senate's activities were significantly adapted during the strict lockdown period in Spring 2020:
  - The Senate withdrew debates and legislative texts from the agenda, but continued to hold weekly oral questions sessions to the Government, which is a constitutional obligation, and examined the emergency legislative texts needed to address the pandemic.
  - Specific arrangements were made for the functioning of the public sittings : in particular, a maximum number of seats available in the chamber was set and the public galleries were used to seat senators.
  - The committees met by videoconference, with the exception of meetings dedicated to the examination of legislative texts ; indeed, the Rules of the Senate stipulate that voting requires the physical presence of senators.
  - The restrictions, both in committees and in public sittings, were subsequently eased following the evolution of the epidemic.

→ This experience shows that a significant amount of work can continue through videoconferencing, especially control and oversight activities. However, deliberations and votes on legislative texts require senators to meet in person, if necessary in reduced numbers, as do question sessions with the Government, in order to comply with the provisions of the Constitution and the Rules of the Senate.

**Mrs Pannita SATARNTRAIPOPE, Thailand**, made the following remarks:

In recent times, many countries around the world, including Thailand, have encountered economic crises, political problems, climate change, and the rapid development of technology. These are all significant factors that cause problems and changes to occur rapidly and with complexity, whether there are events arising from natural disasters that have caused severe damage to the lives and resources of the country, the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted and necessitated changes in lifestyles and work globally, or even events caused by human actions, such as recent protests against governments or parliaments in various countries, which have included the burning and destruction of property within parliamentary buildings. Such incidents have caused damage and severely affected all sectors, including the economy, society, security, as well as the country's image and the operations of government agencies.

The "Parliament" is an important place in the country, a symbol of the exercise of sovereign power. It is the main institution that enacts laws, scrutinizes the administration of state affairs, and the place that reflects the demands of the people. The Parliament is therefore a place where people gather to demonstrate symbolically or organize political activities to make demands on the government. The aforementioned problems reflect that without good preventive and risk management measures, it could affect the duties of the legislative branch, preventing it from operating normally. Furthermore, government services must adapt and prepare to handle such situations or prevent the impacts of such changes. The Secretariat of the Senate is an organization that supports the legislative work of Thailand. It has the duties to support the operations of senators in the process of considering and scrutinizing laws, monitoring of the administration of state affairs, and considering persons to hold positions as stipulated by the Constitution or laws.

Therefore, the Secretariat of the Senate of Thailand has recognized and seen the importance of adapting and preparing for situations that might prevent the organization from holding the sittings of the Senate to perform its duties of considering and scrutinizing laws, which led to the development of the Emergency Response Plan and The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) to serve as guidelines for responding and operating in various crisis or emergency situations, either caused by natural disasters or human actions, and to prepare for emergencies that may arise and cause a halt to the operations of the legislative branch, rendering it unable to perform the roles and duties of the Senate as usual, which would cause severe damage to the country.

The creation of the Senate's special event management plan is to prepare procedures to handle disasters and emergency situations, and to prevent damage or impacts that may occur to the Senate's process management, as well as to reduce the impact and severity that could cause loss of life and property. There is a Parliament Emergency Management Commission responsible for managing emergency situations, planning, and giving orders during critical emergencies such as riots, protests, fires, etc. There are also external agencies with safety duties and responsibilities to provide support and assistance, such as the Royal Thai Police, the Royal Thai Navy, the Marine Department, emergency medical units, etc. Moreover, the Secretariat of the Senate has placed importance on continuity management to prevent and reduce impacts that would cause the legislative branch to halt its operations or be unable to perform the roles and duties of the Senate in accordance with the law, and has set up a Commission on implementing the crisis readiness plan of the Secretariat of the Senate (BC Team). The composition of the Commission includes the Secretary General of the Senate, as the head of the government agency, and high-level executives of the agency, who are responsible for considering, planning, and ordering the agency to be able to drive and support the Senate's operations continuously. It also includes relevant officials from various departments who are a key mechanism in driving the Senate forward to be able to perform its duties

according to the provisions of the constitution and the timeframe prescribed by law, continuously without interruption and without affecting the country's administration.

In considering the impacts of critical emergencies and the necessary resources for holding Senate sittings to ensure the continuous performance of the Senate's duties, the Secretariat of the Senate has measures and procedures to prevent or reduce risks and impacts, taking into account the important resources for supporting Senate sittings, which consist of:

1. Preparation of venues for the sittings. This considers whether the main workplace is usable or not, as a result of the critical emergency. If the main workplace is damaged and unusable, or if using it would be unsafe for senators, senators and staffs must be moved to work at an alternative workplace designated in the response plan to ensure safety and the ability to conduct meetings continuously without interruption.

2. Personnel readiness. This considers whether the agency's personnel can come to work as usual due to the critical emergency. If affected by such a crisis, the Secretariat of the Senate will consider modifying work processes and preparing essential personnel to perform duties at the alternative workplace. For personnel who cannot work at the alternative workplace or are not core staff for the Senate sitting process, executives can assign them to work from home or a convenient location, with support for systems and tools for work.

3. Information technology systems and important data. This considers whether information technology systems or important data are usable as a result of the critical emergency. If they cannot be used normally, the Secretariat of the Senate has prepared a ready-to-use backup database and, for important data not connected to the network system, uses data backup via the agency's V Cloud system. The Secretariat of the Senate recognizes that establishing measures and procedures to prepare for and prevent incidents affecting Senate sittings is crucial to enabling the agency to handle unexpected emergencies. However, for such measures or guidelines to be effective, there must be regular training of the measures or operational guidelines to ensure that executives and relevant personnel can perform their duties correctly.

Therefore, the Secretariat of the Senate has arranged training and drills for the special event response plan for senators, executives, and personnel at least once a year, such as fire response plan drills, riot response plan drills, testing of the parliament building's security technology systems, etc. These are conducted in collaboration with specialized agencies to ensure readiness and the ability to act correctly according to the established guidelines and measures. In addition, the Secretariat of the Senate also places importance on building confidence in the

organization's continuity management to meet the international standard for business continuity management, ISO 22301. It requested an assessment from an external assessment body according to this standard, resulting in the Secretariat of the Senate achieving ISO 22301:2019 certification for its Senate sitting process.

From the foregoing, the inability of the legislative branch to conduct parliamentary proceedings is a significant problem that affects the country's public administration process in many aspects, including enacting laws, budget approval, and the scrutiny of the executive branch's work. The continuity of the legislative branch's operations is therefore extremely important, because even a short interruption can cause damage to the economy, public administration, and public confidence. Measures to reduce risks from critical emergencies that result in the inability to conduct parliamentary proceedings are a matter that the legislatures of all countries should give great importance to. Furthermore, for such risk mitigation measures to be efficient and effective, the legislative branch must place the importance on training, drills, and reviewing the measures to ensure they are clear and practical. The pre-establishment of measures and guidelines and comprehensive risk reduction are therefore essential for the legislature to be able to perform its duties continuously and strongly, and it is considered a way to protect the symbol of democratic principles for its sustainability.

**Ms Chloe Mawson, United Kingdom**, the moderator, thanked all the speakers for their contributions and noted that the debate had highlighted many commonalities in the way parliaments approach risk management.

She emphasised that several speakers had presented similar methods for categorising risks according to their impact and disruptive potential. She also found the approach presented by the French Senate regarding the management of minor incidents likely to briefly disrupt a parliamentary sitting to be of interest.

She further noted that some parliaments had greater institutional flexibility to adapt their procedures in crisis situations, citing in particular the example of North Macedonia, whilst others, such as in France, faced greater constraints, particularly regarding the use of remote voting during the pandemic.

She also emphasised the importance of drills, training and internal communication to ensure the effectiveness of risk management systems.

Finally, she observed that technological developments presented both an opportunity to strengthen the continuity of parliamentary activities and a source of new risks, particularly in the area of cybersecurity.

## THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

### 4. Communication: Mr Mohammed Ebrahim Alsisi Albuainain, Council of Representatives of Bahrain, on 'Parliamentary Leadership in Environmental Sustainability: The Experience of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain in Obtaining ISO 14001:2015'

**H.E Mohammed Ebrahim Alsisi Albuainain** presented the following communication:

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful  
His Excellency Dr. José Pedro Montero, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments,  
Your Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues,  
Honorable audience,

Peace and blessings be upon you all,

It is an honor to stand before you today representing the Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain to present a pioneering experience in the field of environmental sustainability, an experience that would not have been possible without the wise vision and noble directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, who has made environmental protection and sustainability an integral part of Bahrain's comprehensive national development approach. This national direction has also received the direct support and follow-up of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, who has instilled a culture of institutional innovation and placed sustainability at the heart of government priorities.

The Council of Representatives has adopted a proactive approach in integrating environmental sustainability within its institutional work system, recognizing the importance of the parliament serving as a national model in upholding global environmental standards. Within this framework, the Secretariat of the Council of Representatives obtained the international ISO certification (ISO 14001:2015) in environmental management systems, becoming the first parliamentary secretariat in the region to achieve this milestone. This reflects its keenness to achieve efficiency in resource management, reduce emissions, and foster a culture of environmental responsibility within the parliamentary work environment.

In this context, this achievement aligns with the Inter-Parliamentary Union's efforts to promote environmental responsibility among legislative institutions and corresponds with the "Parliaments for the Planet" campaign launched by the IPU, which aims to encourage parliaments to integrate sustainability principles into both their internal operations and external activities. Through this initiative, the Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain has been keen to be an active part of this global trend and to contribute to promoting a culture of environmental sustainability among individuals and institutions through tangible practices within the parliamentary work environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The "Green Parliament" initiative came from our belief that parliamentary work goes beyond legislation and oversight, to become an institutional model reflecting national and international trends toward sustainability. Within this initiative, the teams of the Secretariat applied the principles of environmental management across all council facilities, including rationalizing energy and water consumption, managing waste, reducing paper usage through modern electronic systems, and raising environmental awareness among employees through specialized training and awareness programs.

This qualitative step came with the support and guidance of His Excellency Mr. Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musalam, Speaker of the Council of Representatives, who was keen to make the Council a role model in environmental and administrative governance, in line with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The experience of the Secretariat has become a practical model that can be drawn upon at the regional and international parliamentary levels, having proven that adopting global environmental standards is not an administrative luxury but a long-term investment in enhancing institutional efficiency, boosting confidence in legislative institutions, and affirming the commitment of parliaments to their responsibilities toward the environment and society.

Honorable attendees,

From this platform, I am pleased to invite all member parliaments of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to enhance cooperation and exchange expertise in this field, and to work on developing joint strategies that support the shift toward environmentally friendly parliaments that keep pace with global trends in combating climate change and preserving natural resources.

In conclusion, we do not view this achievement as the end of a development journey, but as a starting point for further pioneering initiatives. We are currently working on expanding the scope of applying sustainability standards to include all aspects of legislative and administrative work, thereby enhancing the position of the Bahraini Parliament as a model of institutional leadership.

Thank you.

Peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be upon you.



## 5. Communication: Mr Kim Minki, Korean National Assembly on 'Restoring Democracy after Martial Law: Reforming Parliamentary Security and Introducing Remote Plenary Sessions'

**Mr Kim Minki**, presented the following communication:

### Introduction

Dear Secretaries General of Parliaments around the world,

It is truly a pleasure to see you all again in Geneva after one year.

I presume that many of you are keenly observing the various incidents unfolding around the world with deep interest and concern.

It is an honour to take this opportunity to explain the function and role of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea in addressing the crisis triggered by the former President's unconstitutional and illegal declaration of extraordinary martial law on the night of December 3, 2024, in full accordance with our Constitution and laws.

### Illegal and Unconstitutional Imposition of Extraordinary Martial Law

On December 3, 2024 at 10:28 p.m., then-President Yoon Suk-yeol declared extraordinary martial law through an emergency address to the nation, broadcast live on television.

In his speech, the former President Yoon unilaterally accused the National Assembly of having become a den of criminals, paralyzing the nation's judicial and administrative systems through legislative dictatorship, and plotting to overthrow the liberal democratic system. Then, through an emergency proclamation, he declared that he would impose a total ban on citizens' political

activities and assemblies, control the press and publications, and authorize arrests and detentions without warrants.

Moreover, he issued an unconstitutional order that completely suspended parliamentary activities. To prevent the National Assembly from exercising its constitutional right to demand the lifting of extraordinary martial law, he mobilized more than 1,800 police officers to blockade the parliamentary complex and bar Members from entering. He further deployed a total of 400 armed martial law troops to the National Assembly, including around 190 special forces who entered the parliamentary grounds by helicopter.

Not only did he attempt to obstruct the legitimate activities of the National Assembly through the use of force, but he also sought to arrest key political figures, including the Speaker and leaders of political parties, in order to neutralize the legislature.

### Lifting of Martial Law and Impeachment of the President

At this moment of crisis, it was the National Assembly - the institution representing the people - that safeguarded Korea's democracy.

Countless citizens gathered in front of the legislature despite the freezing winter cold and late hours to support the National Assembly.

Speaker Woo Won-shik swiftly convened the plenary session and, along with many Members of the National Assembly, climbed over the fence surrounding the parliamentary complex to enter the Plenary Chamber.

Parliamentary aides and party staff of opposition parties, and employees of the National Assembly Secretariat joined in fierce resistance, physically blocking and barricading entrances with furniture, and spraying fire extinguishers and fire hydrants to prevent martial law troops from entering the building.

After forty minutes of attempting to force their way in, at 00:34 a.m. on December 4, 2024, martial law troops, acting in haste, broke office windows on the second floor and entered the parliamentary building. By 00:41 a.m., they reached the Rotunda Hall leading to the Plenary Chamber but were met with determined resistance from the employees of the National Assembly Secretariat waiting inside.

Finally, at 01:01 a.m., the National Assembly passed a resolution demanding the lifting of extraordinary martial law just two hours and thirty minutes after it had been declared. This resolution, adopted in accordance with the procedures

stipulated by the Constitution and the National Assembly Act, effectively nullified the proclamation of extraordinary martial law.

The act of mobilizing police and military forces to blockade the National Assembly and attempting to break into the Plenary Chamber to obstruct parliamentary action far exceeded the constitutional and legal limits of extraordinary martial law. Such powers may be exercised only restrictively in exceptional circumstances that threaten the very existence of the state, such as during wartime.

Accordingly, on December 14, the National Assembly introduced and passed a motion to impeach the President, suspending him from office. He was officially removed on April 4, 2025, following impeachment proceedings by the Constitutional Court. Through a democratic and stable election process, a new government was inaugurated on June 4, 2025.

The extraordinary martial law of December 4, 2024, was an undemocratic act that ignored constitutional and legal procedures and sought to paralyze the functions of the legislature. Yet, the National Assembly overcame this crisis swiftly and peacefully by passing the resolution to lift the martial law through democratic procedures.

Today, as a constitutional institution representing the will of the people, the National Assembly is fully committed to building an unshakable democracy with the steadfast support of the Korean people.

#### Challenges of the National Assembly Secretariat

Since 1987, when the prolonged authoritarian rule in Korea collapsed, the Korean people have been confident that democracy had taken deep root. The former President's undemocratic and unconstitutional actions came as a profound shock to the people and offered a valuable lesson: unless we remain vigilant, democracy can come under threat again.

I take great pride as the Secretary General of the National Assembly who oversaw the management of the situation leading to the lifting of illegal extraordinary martial law on December 3 last year. Currently, I am pursuing several key areas for institutional improvement.

First, the establishment of the National Assembly's police powers.

Currently, the outer perimeter of the National Assembly is guarded by the National Assembly Security Unit under the command of the Commissioner of the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency.

However, this incident clearly revealed that, under the current security system, the executive branch could infringe upon the authority and operations of the National Assembly. Above all, it underscored that, in a presidential system founded on the separation of powers, the Speaker's authority to personally maintain order within the legislature is essential for the parliament to exercise genuine autonomy.

To improve the current system, a number of legislative proposals have been introduced, drawing upon examples from other countries, to strengthen the Speaker's authority over parliamentary security and the maintenance of order, while taking into account Korea's domestic context.

The Secretariat is reviewing these proposals and discussing them in the National Assembly House Steering Committee to determine the most suitable system for Korea's parliament. Measures under consideration range from amending the National Assembly Act to place command of the National Assembly Security Unit, which is made up of dispatched police officers, under the authority of the Speaker, to establishing an independent and autonomous National Assembly security and guard system through the installation of a new security organization.

The National Assembly will establish a robust security and guard system capable of functioning even in times of emergency, so that it can stand as the final stronghold of democracy and defender of the people.

Secondly, the support for the reliable operation of remote video conferences.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Assembly revised its legal framework to allow plenary sessions to be convened through remote video conferencing in exceptional circumstances, such as infectious disease outbreaks or natural disasters.

The recent crisis revealed that video conferencing must be institutionalized as a means of ensuring the continued operation of the legislature in the face of unconstitutional interference with parliamentary activities, such as when the military or police attempt to restrict Members' access to the National Assembly.

Accordingly, the National Assembly is discussing a bill that would authorize deliberations via remote video conferencing, facilitated by the Speaker in consultation with each parliamentary negotiation group. The bill is intended to ensure the continuity of the functions and constitutional authority of the National

Assembly in times of emergency - not only in cases of infectious diseases or natural disasters, but also during war, armed conflict, martial law or similar national emergencies requiring urgent parliamentary decisions.

## Closing

Korea's commitment to safeguarding democracy and constitutional order will never waver. The roots of our democracy run deep. Korea's democracy was achieved through the participation and dedication of the Korean people, and it has developed in tandem with our market economy. We have already demonstrated our capacity to restore constitutional order through democratic and peaceful means on several occasions.

Dear colleagues,

I ask for your continued trust and support in the resilience of Korea's democracy and in the steadfast efforts of the National Assembly.

The National Assembly voted democratically to lift martial law and impeach the President and made every effort to ensure that all subsequent procedures were carried out in a peaceful and orderly manner.

The National Assembly and the government stood united and worked in close cooperation across all sectors, including the economy, diplomacy, and defense, to ease concern and anxiety.

Korea has now fully overcome this crisis and is devoting sustained efforts to prevent the recurrence of such anti-democratic threats and to fulfill the responsibilities of a leading nation in the world.

We ask for the continued trust and close cooperation from the international community in support of these efforts and transformations. Thank you for your attention.

**Mr Ingvar Mattson, Sweden**, noted that the conclusions drawn from the events were to reform security procedures. He said the speaker is surrounded by colleagues who hope to never be in the position you were in. How did you mobilise staff? How did you take decision? He also asked whether the speaker himself felt fear during this process? He sought advice for those who hope to never experience something like this?

**Mr Kim Minki, Korea**, said he had heard the announcement of martial law on television. Living outside Seoul, he made his way to Parliament by taxi. He

explained that he was aware martial law could be lifted by a resolution passed by a majority of Members of Parliament. In consultation with the Speaker of the Assembly, it was decided to hold this vote as soon as possible.

He reported that troops had attempted to enter Parliament. Soldiers had reached the outskirts of the chamber. Faced with this situation, parliamentary staff, ushers and volunteers put up determined resistance to protect the institution. Barricades were improvised using whatever resources were available, and officers used fire extinguishers, among other things, to repel the intruders, managing to preserve the integrity of the premises without anyone being injured.

He added that, in his capacity as Secretary-General, he was familiar with the emergency procedures to be implemented and that a crisis simulation had been organised previously. He acknowledged, however, that facing a real-life situation of such gravity was on a completely different scale. He admitted to feeling a great deal of apprehension, aware that failure to adopt the resolution lifting martial law could have led to violent clashes and serious consequences.

He concluded by emphasising that he had acted in the belief that the National Assembly was the last bastion of democracy, a conviction that had guided his decisions and those of his colleagues throughout these events.



## **6. Communication: Mr Hafeez ullah Sheikh, Senate of Pakistan, on 'Designing modern, Resilient & Futuristic Parliaments: Lessons from Pakistan Senate'**

**Mr Hafeez ullah Sheikh**, presented the following communication:

Honourable President ASPG  
Dr. Jose Pedro MONTERO,  
Respected Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Warm greetings from the Senate of Pakistan!

It is a great honour for me to speak on the important theme of “In the News and Innovation at Parliament” I am delighted to share how the Senate of Pakistan has been working to make our institution more modern, resilient, and responsive to the needs of the people.

In today's world, where governance must adapt quickly to new challenges, the Senate of Pakistan has taken several steps to transform itself into a forward-looking and citizen-centric institution. I would like to briefly highlight a few key initiatives.

### 1. First Parliament to Go Green

In 2016, Pakistan's Parliament became the first in the world to switch entirely to solar energy for its electricity needs.

This step reflects our commitment to protecting the environment and reducing our carbon footprint. It has also shown how public institutions can lead the way in using clean, cost-effective energy. The project has served as a model for other public buildings in the country.

### 2. Introducing an Indigenous AI Chatbot

The Senate of Pakistan has also become the first parliamentary chamber in our region to commission the development of its own AI-powered chatbot.

This initiative, launched under the leadership of the Hon'ble Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, is still in its early stages but holds great promise.

The chatbot will allow members and staff to easily access legislative records, committee reports, debates, and policy documents in real time. It uses advanced natural language processing to save time and improve efficiency in lawmaking and oversight.

Importantly, it is being developed with multilingual support and in compliance with cybersecurity standards to protect institutional data. This innovation reflects our resolve to use technology wisely to strengthen our democratic processes.

### 3. Pandemic-Driven Digital Transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital change in the Senate of Pakistan.

We quickly adopted remote participation for committee meetings, ensuring that parliamentary business continued without interruption. Care was taken to maintain procedural integrity, cybersecurity, and inclusiveness so that all members could participate effectively.

Today, digital tools support many aspects of our work. Our official website and social media platforms provide timely updates, invite public feedback, and help

counter misinformation. We have also expanded our digital archives to assist parliamentarians, researchers, and citizens in accessing reliable information.

#### 4. Public and Inter-Parliamentary Engagement

For us, innovation is not just about technology; it is also about building stronger connections with citizens and other parliaments.

We use digital platforms to gather public input on legislation, hold consultations on policy issues, and engage with our diaspora communities. These efforts have increased transparency and strengthened public trust.

Internationally, we actively exchange experiences with other parliaments through the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). We believe that sharing best practices is key to collective progress.

#### Looking Ahead: A Citizen-Centric Digital Parliament

The Senate of Pakistan remains committed to innovation.

We are strengthening our research capacity with data analytics, AI-based tools, and continuous training for senators and staff. We are also building partnerships with universities, private sector organizations, and international bodies to co-create solutions that reflect our country's diversity and needs.

These efforts include developing local-language AI models to make technology more inclusive and accessible — a step towards using “AI for Good” in parliamentary environments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our journey is guided by a simple principle: we embrace innovation not for its own sake, but to make our democracy more transparent, more effective, and closer to the people we serve.

The steps we have taken — in green energy, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and citizen engagement — are only the beginning. We see them as building blocks for a parliament that is more open, responsive, and prepared for the challenges of the future.

As parliamentary leaders and staffers, it is our duty to continue this journey — to use technology wisely, to keep the trust of our citizens, and to work together for stronger democracies. Thank you.

**Ms Sarah Davies, UK**, asked about the introduction of a chatbot for the Senate. She said the UK is concerned about introducing a chatbot in case it gives incorrect answers, leading to a reduction in trust or that it could be manipulated into giving party political answers.

**Mr Hafeez Ullah Sheikh, Pakistan**, said the proposal is an experiment which is currently only being used for parliamentarians, not for the public, it is a practical tool for MPs to find information. He acknowledged the risks raised and said they are working to try and prevent such issues.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, asked where the chatbot obtained the information which it gives to Members of Parliament?

**Mr Hafeez Ullah Sheikh, Pakistan**, said the chatbot can only draw on information from inside the parliament. For example, a Member who wants to introduce a bill could ask a parliamentary official but that takes time. The chatbot can give an immediate response, it is time saving. Furthermore, parliament is based in Islamabad but when members are in constituency they still need access to information usually provided by parliamentary staff.

## 7. Concluding remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, thanked all members for participating in a full and interesting debate. He reminded colleagues that the next sitting of the would start at 10am tomorrow.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.30PM

# THIRD SITTING

Tuesday 21 October 2025 (morning)

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 10AM

## 1. Introductory remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, welcomed everyone back and reminded colleagues about the timetable for the election timetable.

## 2. Presentation on the 'Welcoming new Parliamentarians' project, Laurence Marzal

**Ms Laurence Marzal, IPU**, presented the ASGP-IPU project 'Welcoming new Parliamentarians'.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,  
Good morning, everyone.

I am truly delighted to be here with you today to talk about a subject that is close to all our hearts: welcoming new parliamentarians. It is always a very special moment in the life of a parliament, a mixture of excitement, change and continuity. And we know full well that the way a parliament prepares to welcome its new members says a lot about its ability to renew itself, pass on its experience and strengthen confidence in the institution. These moments of transition are both exciting and demanding. They require real anticipation, careful coordination between departments and special attention to the women and men who will soon be taking their seats. For beyond the logistical and protocol aspects, it is above all a question of preparing the institution itself to welcome, support and pass on its knowledge. Welcoming new parliamentarians is, in a way, welcoming new energy, new perspectives and sometimes new ways of bringing democracy to life. It is in this spirit that the IPU and the ASGP wanted to document and share best practices observed in parliaments around the world. Through collective and comparative work, we have been able to identify the approaches, tools and processes that enable a parliamentary institution to navigate these periods of renewal methodically, efficiently and, above all, humanely.

It's a real pleasure for me to introduce to you today our new joint publication by the IPU and the ASGP, "Welcoming New Parliamentarians: Good Practices for

Onboarding and Offboarding MPs.”. in a nutshell, it is a toolkit for parliaments to plan, prepare, and welcome new members.

Let me start by saying a few words about how we got there. This publication grew out of a simple but important question: How do parliaments prepare for the arrival, and departure, of their members? Back in 2021, we began by looking at this issue in one parliament, the National Assembly of Chad. The results generated strong interest from other parliaments. To the extent that the ASGP and the IPU decided to expand the research globally. In 2024, more than 70 parliamentary chambers responded to our questionnaire, a great level of engagement from every region of the world. The data was then analysed by a dedicated research team from the National Assembly of Botswana, then headed by its clerk, Barbara Dithapo. From there, we built what you see today: a comparative, short and practical toolkit that captures the diversity of practices from every region of the world.

Now, what purpose does this publication serve? At its heart, this toolkit aims to strengthen parliamentary institutions by helping them manage renewal and change in an organized and inclusive way. Onboarding isn't just about teaching new members where to sit or how to vote, it's about setting them up for success from day one, fostering relationships with staff, ensuring equitable access to resources, and building a shared institutional culture. Likewise, offboarding, something that is often forgotten, is about managing transitions with respect and preserving institutional memory. In short, this publication helps parliaments think strategically about both beginnings and endings.

Moving to its main features, the toolkit is structured in two main parts:

- The first lays the groundwork: it explains how to plan for onboarding and offboarding. This means establish clear governance structures, involve all relevant departments, and engage external stakeholders such as electoral commissions and political parties.
- The second part brings the process to life: it looks at what actually happens when new MPs arrive, how to meet their immediate needs, introduce them to their legislative roles, and continuously improve onboarding programmes through feedback and evaluation.

Throughout the document, you'll find good practices drawn from dozens of parliaments, from Iceland to Botswana, from Canada to Malaysia, showing that there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Each parliament adapts according to its size, culture and resources.

Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to Annex 1 – the Checklist for Smooth Onboarding. This annex is, in my view, one of the most useful tools in the publication. It distils the entire process into a clear, three-phase checklist: planning,

implementation, and evaluation, allowing any parliament to assess its readiness at a glance. It's designed to be flexible and adaptable: not a prescription, but a practical reference that can be tailored to each parliament's context. It covers everything from establishing a steering committee and securing resources before elections, to organizing welcome sessions and setting up monitoring systems afterwards. In other words, it's a hands-on guide to make sure no step is forgotten, because a well-prepared parliament is one that can welcome its members with confidence and help them serve effectively from day one.

To conclude, this toolkit is more than a publication: it's an invitation - An invitation for parliaments to look inward, to reflect, to compare, and to continuously improve their internal planning and coordination so that they can be fully ready to welcome new members when the time comes. Thank you.

[Welcoming-new-Parliamentarians\\_Toolkit.pdf](#)

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, thanked Ms Marzal for all her hard work bringing together the survey responses from Association members into a practical and useful tool. He said many parliaments will find this toolkit helpful.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, proposed that the Association formally adopt the ASGP-IPU Report on 'Welcoming new parliamentarians'.

The report was adopted by the Association.



## THEME: ENSURING THE SAFETY OF MPS AND PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

### 5. Communication by Dr Viacheslav Shtuchnyi, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

**Dr Viacheslav Shtuchnyi**, presented the following communication:

The war has fundamentally changed the life of our country and the daily operations of all state institutions.

On February 24, 2022, from the very first hours of Russia's full-scale invasion, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine faced an unprecedented challenge — how to preserve the continuity of parliamentary work under conditions of real danger.

Despite the threat of a direct assault on the capital, the Parliament did not cease its activities. On the contrary, it demonstrated unity and efficiency.

In February 2022, the Secretariat, in cooperation with the leadership of the Parliament, parliamentary factions and groups, as well as Members of Parliament, established a special working regime that ensured both the swift adoption of decisions and compliance with security requirements.

From the first days of the invasion, the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada, together with the Department of State Protection of Ukraine, developed new security protocols.

Their goal was to protect Members of Parliament and staff, and to ensure parliamentary operations even when the enemy was merely twenty kilometers from the building.

We ensured:

- logistics;
- communication;
- backup power sources for parliamentary buildings in case of damage to the main networks;
- reserve workplaces;
- the digital solutions introduced during the pandemic were upgraded with additional security measures, which made it possible to operate both online and offline;
- an alternative satellite communication system to guarantee stable communication even during power outages.

The Verkhovna Rada deliberately refrained from adopting remote voting — neither during the pandemic nor under martial law.

The Parliament continued to work in the session hall while following all safety protocols.

In case of an air raid alert, the session is suspended, and work resumes only after the official “all clear” signal. This was a principled decision.

We demonstrated that the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine works, the state functions, and democracy does not stop — even in the darkest times. The Parliament’s work became a symbol of the country’s resilience and the strength of its institutions. Today, the Parliament continues its work despite ongoing security threats. Missiles and drones have on multiple occasions been shot down in close proximity to the Verkhovna Rada buildings.

In early 2025, a drone strike blast wave damaged the parliamentary committee buildings. Moreover, in October, debris from a downed missile fell only 50–70 meters from the session hall.

After one of the massive attacks that left Kyiv without water, the Parliament did not stop — we continued working using backup power systems. This demonstrates our sense of responsibility to the state and readiness to act under any circumstances.

Today, the Verkhovna Rada is an institution capable of operating autonomously. We have implemented a modern electronic document management system, data backup, and secure tools for remote work by MPs and Secretariat staff. Based on our experience, we also recommend ensuring the reliable preservation of original legislative acts and historical documents essential for institutional memory.

### **Security of Key Individuals and Delegations**

Special attention is given to the security of the Verkhovna Rada’s leadership, its buildings, and foreign delegations.

According to the Law of Ukraine “On State Protection of State Authorities and Officials,” the Department of State Protection of Ukraine — a special law enforcement body subordinated to the President and accountable to the Parliament — carries out these functions.

In many parliamentary secretariats worldwide, the security department is part of the Secretariat itself. In Ukraine, professional contract military personnel perform this role.

In April 2022, the list of persons entitled to state protection was expanded. Previously, the Department of State Protection of Ukraine ensured the security of the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada and the First Deputy Speaker; now this also includes the Deputy Speaker.

After leaving office, these officials remain under protection for one year, except as otherwise provided by law.

At present, this issue requires further refinement, and in our opinion, the period of state protection should be extended.

In addition, Members of Parliament may be provided with state protection in cases where there is a threat to their life or health.

The Administration of State Protection of Ukraine has a specific procedure regulating this matter.

Special attention is paid to the security of foreign delegations. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Verkhovna Rada has hosted over two hundred delegations.

Each visit is thoroughly organized — the Secretariat of the Parliament, in cooperation with the Department of State Protection of Ukraine, the National Police, and other authorities, plans the program, coordinates it, and accompanies guests until they cross the national border of Ukraine.

### **Evacuation, Air Raid Procedures, and Medical Support**

Ensuring the safety of MPs, Secretariat staff, journalists, and members of foreign delegations working in the Parliament is our top priority. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada has implemented a clear algorithm of actions during air raid alerts. Every staff member uses the “Air Alert” mobile application, which provides real-time notifications about the start and end of alerts.

The app is synchronized with Ukraine’s national alert system, including within parliamentary buildings.

Shelter locations have been identified and verified, and their capacity calculated. All evacuation routes, procedures, and alternative workplaces are predefined and practiced to perfection.

We also devote particular attention to medical support. Medical professionals and ambulances are permanently stationed within the Parliament buildings.

Secretariat employees regularly undergo training in first aid, evacuation, psychological support, and emergency response.

All these measures ensure the safety and stability of the Parliament’s work, even in the most challenging circumstances, and guarantee readiness to act in any emergency.

### **Information Security and Media Access**

Safety is not limited to shelters. During the war, we pay special attention to information security.

From the first days of the full-scale Russian invasion, media access to the Verkhovna Rada was restricted.

Live broadcasts of plenary sessions were temporarily suspended, and real-time information was released with a delay.

This was done primarily to ensure the security of Members of Parliament. These measures, implemented in accordance with parliamentary resolutions of 2022 and 2023, made it possible to balance security with public communication. On May 6, 2024, media representatives regained partial access to the work of the Verkhovna Rada. On September 16, 2025, live broadcasts of plenary sessions were resumed.

### **Countering Disinformation**

A few words about countering disinformation.

The Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine operates a Monitoring and Analytics Department.

Its staff continuously monitor the information space regarding parliamentary activity using specialized analytical tools and prepare daily and periodic analytical reports.

If the media publish materials containing false or misleading information about the Parliament's work, they are officially refuted after verification.

At the national level, efforts to counter information threats are coordinated by the Center for Countering Disinformation under the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.

The Center's main task is to detect, analyze, and neutralize disinformation that may threaten national security.

It also coordinates cooperation among government institutions to ensure a unified and effective information security policy.

### **Cybersecurity**

Finally, an essential aspect — cybersecurity.

Since 2022, our IT division has repelled more than 1,300 cyberattacks targeting internal networks and public systems.

The Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada has established a Security Operations Center (SOC) to respond to cyber incidents.

We have also signed a cooperation agreement with the European Parliament, allowing for technical knowledge exchange and urgent assistance. Additionally, we cooperate closely with the Cyber Police and relevant units of the Security Service of Ukraine.

It should also be noted that the official website of the Verkhovna Rada has ranked among the most visited government websites over the past three years. All these measures, together with those mentioned earlier, ensure that the Parliament continues to work uninterrupted and effectively, despite the severe conditions caused by the war.

**Mr Paul Gottke, Germany**, expressed his respect for the fortitude of Ukraine in conditions of war. He asked how the Ukrainian MPs deliver communications and texts under conditions of war?

**Ms Sarah Davies, UK**, noted that deep fakes are increasingly becoming a problem, with software such as saura, she noted a recent case in the UK of a deepfake video announcing an MP defection to another party. She enquired whether Ukraine was confronting this issue. She noted that live broadcast was paused then resumed in September 2025, she asked how they decided to re-introduce live proceedings?

**Dr Viacheslav Shtuchnyi, Ukraine**, said in the past MPs had offices in the local constituencies but, since the war, they have commissioned busses to help MPs travel to meet. On deep fakes, he said there is a special unit looking at deep fakes as it is a big problem. He said that propaganda is a big issue. He said broadcast is dangerous, in 3 or 4 minutes missiles can be directed to parliament so he does not think it is safe. However, there is a lot of demand from the public, so they are attempting to keep broadcasts working.



## 6. Communication by Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, House of Commons of Canada

**Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu** presented the following communication:

### Introduction

In recent years, Canadian members of Parliament have encountered a wide spectrum of incidents—from online abuse and death threats to physical intimidation, property damage, and foreign-state coercion.

This presentation discusses the House of Common’s evolving approach to protecting members and their staff.

We’ll begin by examining the rapidly evolving threat environment and the broader implications for democratic engagement. Next, I’ll provide a snapshot of the Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and Corporate Security (SAA-CS), our institutional hub for member and staff safety. Then, we’ll walk through the main programs and tools we’ve developed in response—focusing on how they work, and what makes them effective. We will discuss some new threats, hardly unimaginable just a few years ago. Finally, I’ll wrap up with some key strategic imperatives we believe have global relevance.

#### Why Security for Parliamentarians Matters

Members of Parliament, by the nature of their office and the variety of work they are called upon to perform, come into contact with a wide range of individuals and groups. Members can, therefore, be subject to all manner of interference and obstruction.

In Canada, the purpose of parliamentary privilege is to allow the House to carry out its constitutional functions, and its members to carry out their duties as representatives of the electorate without undue interference. Without it, members may self-censor, avoid sensitive issues, or retreat from public visibility.

#### Evolution and Ongoing Challenges of Safeguarding Members

Since 2019, there’s been an 800% increase in threats to members of Parliament—ranging from personal harassment to coordinated disinformation and physical intimidation.

When we tighten security on Parliament Hill, it leads to issues in constituency offices, when we tighten security there, it leads to issues at the personal residences of members, when we tighten security there, it leads to issues when members attend events.

Threats now follow members home. They follow them online. They target their families, staff, and even constituents.

- In March 2024, somebody set fire to the garage at Liberal MP Brendan Hanley’s Yukon home.
- In 2023, an individual smashed the front window of Liberal MP Vance Badawey’s home with a baseball bat, threatened his neighbours and chased kids down the street.

- A man was charged with uttering threats against Conservative MP Eric Duncan, from Ontario, four months after the same man was also charged for threatening then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.
- Protesters have turned up at the homes of the former Minister of Justice, Arif Virani, and then of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly.

These are just a few samples of recent incidents targeting members from different parties. Because of this, our operating security model had to be redefined. It now travels with the member.

#### Security Partnerships and Evolving Responsibilities

The 2014 attack on Parliament Hill led to the creation of the Parliamentary Protective Service (PPS) in 2015, consolidating physical security under one command. The Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and Corporate Security, under the House of Commons, sets the security standards and works with the Parliamentary Protective Service to implement them throughout the parliamentary precinct. The Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and Corporate Security partnerships have since expanded—with national partners such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC), and, most recently, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS).

#### Evolving Threats and Responsibility to Protect

After 2019, Corporate Security’s mandate shifted dramatically—from precinct-first to member-first. The Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and Corporate Security has a shared responsibility to protect not just members, but also their staff, interns, and volunteers.

This shift also reflects the reality that members are highly visible and increasingly vulnerable employers, responsible for protecting the people who support their work. In April 2024, the Board of Internal Economy approved a business case seeking considerable additional resources for security related purposes.

#### Key Security Services

##### Proactive threat detection and risk management

Our approach is layered, preventative, and personalized, including risk assessments, surveillance countermeasures, duress systems, intelligence briefings, secure communication tools, and police liaison.

Through real-time monitoring of public online content, we can detect cyberbullying, harassment, planned events targeting members and their offices,

and physical threats. Analysts coordinate with members' offices, social media platforms, investigators, and law enforcement.

Given modern threats like covert surveillance and digital espionage, we use counter-technical intrusion measures—radio frequency sweeps, signal jammers, soundproofing, and secure mobile device storage—so members can meet privately without fear of interception.

#### Mobile duress alarm and emergency tools

With one touch, members trigger emergency responses, whether in the parliamentary precinct or remote locations. Geo-fencing directs alerts to the Parliamentary Protective Service or local police, activating GPS tracking only upon alarm to protect privacy.

#### Residential and constituency office security

Constituency offices, often vulnerable as public workplaces staffed by civilians, receive support across over 400 locations nationwide. We also assess member's residences and provide advisory support upon request. We work closely with local police across Canada to build strong relationships, share information, and enhance member safety within their constituencies

#### Travel and event security

Before travel, we coordinate with CSIS, RCMP, and Global Affairs Canada for risk assessment. ParlVoyage, a secure travel toolkit, provides encrypted devices, 24/7 cybersecurity support, and an emergency-ready app, allowing secure communication on mobile devices.

For public events outside the parliamentary precinct, we arrange on-site presence via local police or vetted private security.

#### Training and awareness

We offer ongoing training on de-escalation, lockdown protocols, emergency response and digital hygiene, including simulations and scenario-based workshops for high-risk members and their staff. We now offer security briefings for new members at the start of each Parliament, and these briefings are available to all members upon request.

#### New Threats: 21st Century Security Challenges

Members can also be subject to other forms of more modern intimidation. I will present two of them to you:

#### Alleged Intimidation by Foreign Government:

In May 2023, Michael Chong, Conservative MP for Wellington—Halton Hills, raised a question of privilege in the House about attempts by the People’s Republic of China to intimidate him and his family. He said this retaliation followed his motion condemning China’s actions against the Uyghur minority.

In his ruling, the Speaker acknowledged the seriousness of the threats and concluded that the matter constituted a prima facie case of privilege. The House then referred the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

In April 2024, the committee presented a report with 29 recommendations addressing national security broadly and parliamentary concerns specifically. Key recommendations included:

- Educating members on foreign interference threats;
- Ensuring members are promptly informed if targeted;
- Keeping all caucuses and independent members updated via threat notifications;
- Providing security intelligence to candidates, including sitting members; and
- Informing parliamentarians involved in election security ahead of time.

**Cyber-attacks Targeting Members by a Foreign State-Backed Group:**

In April 2024, Garnett Genuis, Conservative MP for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, raised a question of privilege alleging that several members, including himself, were targeted by cyber-attacks from a China-backed hacker group. He claimed the government knew but withheld this information from members.

On May 8, 2024, in his ruling the Speaker noted improvements in notification processes, citing a May 2023 ministerial directive requiring the government to inform members of security threats.

Cyber-attacks from foreign entities are increasing. While Parliament protects its own systems, it struggles to secure external tools like personal emails members use for work.

In response, the House Administration continuously updates its cybersecurity program to address emerging risks and protect operations. The IT security team safeguards parliamentary information, systems, and devices used by members in Ottawa, constituencies, and remotely, focusing solely on legislative functions.

**Strategic Imperatives**

Our strategy rests on four pillars:

1. Intelligence-led prevention;
2. National and local collaboration;

3. Physical and psychological proximity to members; and
4. Trust and credibility as operational assets.

We're focused on:

- Embedding security into the daily workflow of members;
- Enhancing anticipatory intelligence;
- Investing in emotional resilience for members and staff; and
- Expanding our capacity for discreet, agile intervention.

This is what allows us to move fast, act smart, and build safety without building walls.

**Mr Ingvar Mattson, Sweden,** said he recognised a lot of what Canada said, in particular regarding hacking from China and Iran. He noted the pressure on himself, as Secretary General, to increase their safety. However, he said this raises expectations on parliamentary staff when he feels this obligation should fall on police or security forces. Parliament does not have a police force, at some point parliamentary staff have to say that they cannot do everything MPs expect. He asked whether Mr Brochu ever hesitated to bring in measures, that there are limits to what parliament can do in this space?

**Mr Philippe Schwaab, Switzerland,** said the reality described was the same in Switzerland. He said they are currently undertaking an inquiry into harassment online of members of parliament, more and more parliamentarians are hesitating to come forward for election due to the level of harassment. He asked how Mr Brochu tackles the issue of reticence of Members to come forward due to harassment and threats. For Members who do not want the security measures, how do you persuade them.

**Mr Eric Tavernier, France,** noted the growing number of physical attacks in France and said there is a problem of credibility in the protection of the police in the face of the menace. He said the Speaker asks the Member to report these cases. To improve credibility, there is a new law, the assembly can now act as a civil party in cases where MPs are attacked physically by individuals. He enquired whether this option existed in Canada?

**Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia,** said she was struck by Mr Brochu's comments on the nature of collaboration between agencies and national and local level. She asked to what extent there is sufficient strategic oversight of the security arrangements that exist for parliamentarians. Do you have in place formal agreements that sufficiently address the various aspects of security of parliamentarians?

**Ms Susana MARTINS, Portugal,** said we do not want to create barriers between politicians and the people, did you have security incidents that led to introduction of these measures?

**Mr Jean MUKUALA BATEKE, Democratic Republic of Congo,** asked whether precaution protection was automatic or if it is commissioned by the parliamentarian?

**Mr Najib El Khadi, Morocco,** said we hear a lot about the issue of harassment at the ASGP. He noted it is a new and growing phenomenon. He suggested the ASGP develop the debate on this phenomenon at its next session to see what is the extent of this phenomenon, and whether it has a global dimension. He enquired whether it is typically western? He queried whether in the Arab world and Africa there are fewer cases of this issue? It would be really interesting to enlighten us on a phenomenon which impacts institutions and democracy.

**Mr Jean-Philippe BROCHU, Canada,** responded to Sweden that he agrees that the more we do, the more expectations are raised. He said the incident in 2014 of a shooting in parliament was a fiasco. There was a total lack of communication between the police and security services. After that, a lot was done to coordinate and ensure the same situation could not happen again. There has been a will to share information and coordinate action. He remarked that balancing desired independence of parliamentary services with coordination with police is delicate. The parliament is independent from the executive. The mounted police is a federal force managed by the executive, so protecting independence is a challenge.

In response to Switzerland, on how to convince parliamentarians to accept safety measures, he said the number of incidents has increased significantly and most have been affected by threats and harassment. He said there are regular cases of citizen arrests where an individual encounters a MP on the pavement and tries to arrest them. Several MPs have suffered this threat, online and offline. Many parliamentarians have decided not to stand because of the abuse. There is a climate where MPs are very open to request protection. It is actually difficult to respond to all these requests.

In response to France, he said they strongly encourage MPs and personnel to go to the police. Accusations can be made through the justice system, and there is the possibility for these to go before the courts. Often the Ministry of Justice says the dossiers are sufficiently full without the need to go through the courts. He said they ask private lawyers to act for parliamentarians.

To Switzerland, he said yes, we do have agreements in place to exchange information with security officers, not only for physical but also for cyber security.

Sometimes, if they have information in advance, they can take action. Other times, there is no forewarning, a person can present themselves at an MP's house without warning. All we can do in this case is provide training and prepare security systems. All MPs have security systems for their residences.

In response to Congo, he said when a threat is detected the protection becomes automatic. He said Canadian police are very concerned with protecting parliamentarians. We take a zero-risk based approach. Prevention is key.

In response to Morocco, he agreed that the number of questions during the debate shows the interest of colleagues and indicates a comparative approach might be interesting.



## 7. Communication by Mr Xolile George, Parliament of South Africa

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

### Introduction

The Republic of South Africa became a constitutional democracy in 1994 when, for the first time, everyone could vote for the Government of their choice. The advent of democracy, and the election of public representatives to the National Assembly (NA) and what would become the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) (previously the Senate), thus had the effect of devolving political power from a racially exclusive elite to a diverse collective – 400 members in the NA and 90 in the NCOP. The first democratically elected Speaker of the Assembly, Dr Frene Ginwala encapsulated what would be the role of the new Parliament when she said that –

“A parliament is that institution which represents and keeps alive a country’s highest political achievement, that achievement that distinguishes a democratic society from a mere collection of warlords. The achievement I refer to is the contract between divergent groups to recognise one another as legitimate and composed of citizens with opposing views – as opponents with alternative policies, not as enemies.”

Whereas many of the incoming members had been involved in the resistance to the Apartheid regime, and had consequently endured great personal risks, they now had constitutionally bestowed authority and responsibilities, which brought novel challenges, both for themselves and the stability of the nascent State. This was especially pertinent in the early years given South Africa’s history and the residual potential for social unrest and destabilization . It was understood that members, and the parliamentary staff on whom they depended, had to be able to work in safety and

without fear of persecution. At the same time, the democratic Parliament had to be open and accessible so that the public could feel invested in the institution and free to approach their representatives without risk. This time of transition was succeeded by the perils of a new millennium: the Covid pandemic and the exponential expansion of technology. It is arguably true that parliamentarians now face a wider array of challenges and threats than ever before.

#### Statutory Privileges and Protection

The Constitution of South Africa (1996) sets out the powers and functions of Parliament as a distinct arm of State and thereby entrenched the trias politica and a system of checks and balances. The constitutional order demanded that parliamentarians be granted singular privileges and protections. The principal constitutional privilege was that of freedom of speech – immunity from prosecution for anything said or produced within the Legislature – as well as the right to attend parliamentary proceedings. These privileges were not unfettered but could be limited by the rules and orders of the Legislature. Parliamentary staff were also afforded limited protections, particularly from obstruction and hindrance while performing their duties. These powers were elaborated on in the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act (2004) (the Powers and Privileges Act).

In accordance with the separation of powers principle, the Powers and Privileges Act conferred joint control over the precincts of Parliament to the Speaker of the NA and the Chairperson of the NCOP, as the presiding officers. This meant, firstly, that the State Security Services may only enter, and remain in the premises, under the authority of the presiding officers – although provision was made to allow the security services to intervene in the event of immediate danger to a person or damage to property. Constitutionally the “security services of the Republic consist of a single defence force, a single police service and any intelligence services established in terms of the Constitution.” The Powers and Privileges Act continued that a person may not serve or execute any summons, or arrest another person, within the boundaries of the Legislature without the permission of the Speaker or the Chairperson. A person who contravened the Powers and Privileges Act can be held liable and face fines or imprisonment. As is the case internationally, a considerable amount of legislative work is carried out off-site. On this point, the Powers and Privileges Act states that –

“In so far as it may be necessary for the achievement of the objects of this Act in a case where a House or committee convenes beyond the seat of Parliament, this Act applies as if the premises where the House or committee is sitting were within the precincts of Parliament. ”

The prerogative of the Legislature to control its precinct was tested during the State of the Nation Address by the President in 2015, when, without the knowledge of the presiding officers, the security services temporarily deployed a device to obstruct cell phone signals in the Chamber. Whereas the Minister of State Security subsequently explained that the device had been used in error, the Supreme Court agreed that “action that might interfere with the ordinary functioning of Parliament, and which might threaten the openness of Parliament, would have to be specifically authorized by the presiding officers.”

Together with the Powers and Privileges Act, the Legislature is defined as a national key point as per the National Key Points Act (1980). This Act placed a special onus on Parliament to secure its precinct, including the appointment of competent security personnel. The Critical Infrastructure Protection Act (2019) was since developed with the intent of repealing the National Key Points Act (1980) but has not yet been fully implemented. The need for Parliament to have independent security led to the establishment of the Parliamentary Protection Services (PPS). The PPS are defined as any employee authorised by the institution to perform security and protection services within the precincts.

Another constitutional defence for parliamentarians was their prerogative to vote in secret. In this regard, the Constitution (1996) determined that, in the NA, the election of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the President – which take place at the commencement of every five-years (and whenever a vacancy arises thereafter) – must be by secret ballot. The NCOP must, when needed, elect the Chairperson in the same way. But there are no such provisions for other decisions. In 2017, after a legal challenge to the procedures governing voting in a motion of no confidence in the President, the Constitutional Court concluded that, despite the absence of specific rules, the Speaker should allow members to vote in secret in certain circumstances. However, in making any such determination, the Court agreed that the Speaker must, inter alia, take account of the need for transparency as well as the right of members to follow the dictates of personal conscience. Notably, the Speaker must evaluate the prevailing circumstances in the country, and specifically whether they would allow members to vote in a way that would not expose them to illegitimate hardships. The Constitutional Court commented that –

“As is the case with general elections where a secret ballot is deemed necessary to enhance the freeness and fairness of the elections, so it is with the election of the President by the National Assembly. This allows Members to exercise their vote freely and effectively, in accordance with the conscience of each, without undue influence, intimidation or fear of disapproval by others...The frustration or disappointment of the losing presidential hopeful and his or her supporters could conceivably have a wide range of prejudicial consequences for Members who are known to have contributed to the loss....Conversely, a Member of Parliament could

be exposed to a range of reasonably foreseeable prejudicial consequences when called upon to pronounce through a vote on the President's accountability or continued suitability for the highest office....”

### Safety in the Chambers of Parliament

The proceedings and internal arrangements in the NA and NCOP – the two Houses and their committees – are regulated by the Rules of Parliament. Some of the regulatory principles were inherited from the Westminster tradition. The NA Chamber, for example, was designed so that the governing party and opposition sat opposite each other across the floor (which may not be crossed). The Serjeant-at-Arms with his/her Mace was tasked with maintaining the safety of members and controlling access to the Chamber. The NCOP employed the Usher of the Black Rod for a similar purpose.

In the case of the public, the rules were designed to complement the constitutional injunction that the NA must, among other things, “conduct its business in an open manner, and hold its sittings, and those of its committees, in public, but reasonable measures may be taken to regulate public access....” Furthermore, the Assembly “may not exclude the public, including the media, from a sitting of a committee unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society.”

The rules accordingly state that the power to admit visitors to Parliament vests in the Speaker and the Chairperson of the NCOP. All visitors must be subjected to a security check or screening before entering the precincts or a venue utilised for parliamentary work. The Serjeant-at-Arms must remove any person present in any part of the precinct without authorisation, or who disrupts the proceedings, and may call on the PPS for assistance. In terms of legislators, the rules proclaimed that members may not, inter alia, bring weapons or dangerous objects of any kind into the House (nor replicas of such). Furthermore, members may not engage in disorderly conduct, including creating serious disruptions or using or threatening violence against a member or another person.

Following the inception of the Fifth democratic Parliament in 2014, the Houses experienced several disruptions and security concerns. These involved incidents of violence when some members refused to leave after being ordered to do so by the presiding officers. The Rules Committees then adopted procedures to regulate how members could be physically removed in a manner which mitigated the potential for injury. These procedures stipulated that, when so instructed by a presiding officer, the Serjeant-at-Arms or Usher must remove a member from the House. The PPS and, in extraordinary circumstances, the State security services, could assist, and “may use such force as may be reasonably necessary.” These incidents also resulted in the employment of additional PPS personnel. While these officers received special

training, they were explicitly prohibited from carrying arms into the Chambers. The decision to increase security was taken reluctantly, again cognizant that the institution should not be associated with coercion. Certain political parties nevertheless argued that what they understood as a political problem could not be resolved with forceful methods. The right of Parliament to remove members was finally upheld by the Constitutional Court which found that “parliamentary immunities could never go as far as to give a member license to disrupt proceedings that Parliament or the House would be incapacitated from conducting its business.”

In 2022, following disruptions in the NA, it was alleged that some female members had been subjected to gender-based violence by PPS personnel. Parliament subsequently solicited legal counsel to investigate the matter which led to a rule amendment to the effect that PPS staff of one gender should, as far as possible, only endeavour to remove members of the same gender. There is evidence to suggest that the potential for political disruptions within Parliament has declined, and there have been no serious incidents since the election of the Seventh Administration in 2024.

#### Parliamentary Administration and Institutional Policy

The statutes and rules described above provided the framework within which Parliament could protect its members and staff. Still, questions of detail and administration remained. These questions were addressed by way of an integrated Security Policy adopted in 2005. This policy expounded on the duties of the Secretary to Parliament to ensure security assessments were undertaken and that the institution remained strictly compliant with security standards. The policy also defined the respective functions of the PPS; the State security services and policing agencies.

PPS was tasked with internal security, while the police assumed responsibility for physical safety and protecting eminent persons and office-bearers. Collaborative working relations were also reinforced with the National Defence Force, the State Security Agency and Disaster Management Control. Additionally, the policy established protocols for vetting, access control for different categories of persons, arrangements for special events such as the Annual State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic and the management of sensitive information. PPS also assumed functions for committees and parliamentary delegations travelling and meeting outside of Cape Town.

Parliament was moreover made subject to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993) which mandated State institutions to create safe working environments. This was the basis for Parliament’s Safety, Health and Environment Policy of 2018. Read with other laws, the policy affirmed that the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure must maintain parliamentary infrastructure and ensure that all buildings remain free from hazards. The Legislature itself appointed a Safety, Health

and Environment Manager whose functions included the implementation of all health, safety and emergency systems and protocols. The policy also mandated the Human Resources Division to provide occupational health services to all employees and parliamentarians. These services incorporate wellness, lifestyle advice and confidential counselling. An on-site nursing station aids in medical emergencies.

On the question of health and safety in the precinct, it is worth reflecting on the emergency measures that were put in place during the Covid pandemic. Soon after the outbreak, Parliament adopted the Covid Management Policy (2020) whose purpose was to minimise risks while allowing the institution to discharge its constitutional duties. Among other interventions, the policy prescribed that those with symptoms of infection should not attend the Legislature in person but instead work from home. Those at Parliament were compelled to wear protective masks and observe social distancing protocols. This meant that attendance in the Houses was inevitably limited, an eventuality assuaged by the employment of online and hybrid meetings. Covid countermeasures lapsed in 2022, albeit the system of online and hybrid meetings remain in use.

#### Protection of Personal Information and Data Security

The unprecedented advancements in technology have presented new risks for political office-bearers and those working with Parliament. Almost all personal and employment information is now stored in electronic databases – within Parliament and beyond – and most correspondence is by email. Members and staff are also very active and share information on social media and online platforms.

At a national level, the Protection of Personal Information Act (2013) was introduced to protect the right to privacy. This Act regulates the processing and sharing of personal information that is entered into record. Personal information encompasses, among other details, identity and contact records, financial and medical information and criminal or employment history. The Act therefore required Parliament to control access to information, both internally and for those who may correspond with the institution. A recent example of a potential breach of the Act occurred when a member posted parliamentary correspondence online which included the email addresses of staff. When the matter was raised with the Speaker, she opted, on behalf of the institution, to issue a stern caution to those concerned.

The South African Parliament also adopted an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy in 2021. This policy was derived from best practices and standards internationally. As such, Parliament must carry out regular assessments of its ICT systems; exercises which identify infrastructure vulnerabilities and inform the development of concomitant controls. Furthermore, the policy regulated user accounts and password management, network maintenance and procedures in the event of data breaches – which must be reported to Parliament's ICT Division

without delay. Importantly, the policy envisaged systematic training for members and staff on security protocols. This was essential not least because members and many staff were given communication devices and portable computers as tools of trade. The use of devices is also regulated by policy, which incorporates the imperative of maintenance undertaken by the institution. It may be of interest to note that the average age of members in the current Parliament is considerably lower compared to the previous terms; and that younger members are generally more familiar with technology and are thus able to navigate potential risks.

These interventions have significantly reduced risks although they have not been a failsafe. One of the challenges has been, given the integration of technology and information systems, how to manage personal use, and the role of the administration in this regard. Another challenge for ICT will be how to manage artificial intelligence (AI). There is no doubt that the evolution of AI will require ongoing review to harness its benefits while mitigating inherent risks.

### Security Incidents and Conclusions

Parliaments around the globe face a growing multiplicity of threats from different origins – individuals, protestors, co-ordinated syndicates and even international actors. These risks are not limited to physical dangers but increasingly involve other means such as the manipulation of technology, data breaches and cyber-attacks.

The South African Parliament has experienced several incidents over the preceding decades. In 2015, a crowd of students protesting about university tuition fees forced their way into the parliamentary precinct while the Houses were in session. In 2018, a member of staff committed suicide in one of the parliamentary buildings. More recently, a member of Parliament was allegedly assassinated while visiting in a province, and three members of the Portfolio Committee on Police came under attack while engaging in oversight work. In September, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts raised a concern that he had been followed – a fact attributed to a pending committee inquiry. Parliament has also experienced ICT attacks of which one recent example was a hack which resulted in the unauthorized upload of dubious content to one of the institution's streaming channels.

Perhaps the most publicized security breach arose in 2022 when an arsonist infiltrated and set fire to the National Assembly and Old Assembly buildings – an event which finally gutted the NA Chamber. In response, the Secretary deemed it appropriate to commission forensic investigators to inquire into the circumstances. This investigation identified a range of systems and maintenance failures including the poor perimeter monitoring and defective emergency equipment. The absence of a parliamentary chief of security was also highlighted as a contributing factor.

Parliament has since undertaken to address all these shortcomings, a commitment supported by the employment of a Security Manager in 2023. The NA Chamber is currently being rebuilt.

In conclusion, the evolution of the parliamentary environment has necessitated ongoing statutory and administrative reforms to ensure that members and their support staff could work in safety. The South African Parliament has, over time, approached the matter of security in line with legal principles and environmental factors. Of paramountcy has been the need to harmonize security with the vibrancy of a young democracy and the constitutional imperatives of openness and transparency. Consequently, security assessments must continue to be strategic and focused. The security of Parliament also requires continuous efforts to expand cooperation across different security agencies, while not compromising the status of the Legislature as a distinct arm of the State, responsible for its own precinct. Finally, the ever-expanding range and complexity of security threats will lend new impetus to inter-parliamentary partnerships for the purposes of sharing experiences and solutions.

**Mr Ahmed Manna, Egypt**, asked about measures that guarantee the security of staff and Members outside parliament, and commented protection are less strong for staff. Is the secretariat doing anything to secure MPs and staff outside parliament? Would the secretariat follow up on MPs and staff to see what they are susceptible in private lives, in person and online. Does it investigate to see if a mistake was made by the MP? He suggested this might be a big burden of staff time to follow-up and implement parliamentary immunities especially when it comes to threats outside parliament. Are Secretary Generals doing anything beyond parliamentary immunity to investigate private attacks?

**Dr Gabriel Gosiamo MALEBANG, Botswana**, asked about the security strategy and the national laws which regulate how key points are secured. Internally and proactively, as the administration of parliament he asked how do you draw up a security strategy on the basis of threat perception? Secondly, he asked whether there is a need for legislators to have their own intelligence gathering capacity to inform a security capacity which could tackle threats which have been signalled.

**M Xolile George, South Africa**, replied to Egypt that we have to go further than standard protection measures and protect staff and MPs outside parliament. He said inside parliament they have a comprehensive approach but outside, there are different jurisdictions, it cannot be a decision of parliament alone to trigger these actions as it involves law enforcement too.



## 8. Communication by Ms Cheloy E Velicaria-Garafil, House of Representatives of the Philippines

**Ms Cheloy E Velicaria-Garafil** presented the following communication:

Honorable Dr. José Pedro Montero, President of the ASGP;  
Fellow Secretaries-General and Parliamentary representatives; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of the Philippines, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to this esteemed assembly. It is both an honor and a privilege to stand among fellow custodians of parliamentary democracy—those who labor quietly yet resolutely to ensure our institutions remain resilient, responsive, and rooted in public trust.

As Secretaries General, we are entrusted with safeguarding the integrity of legislative processes, preserving institutional memory, and upholding the principles of transparency, efficiency, and accountability. These responsibilities become even more critical when confronted with threats that can compromise the very heart of parliamentary democracy.

This year's theme, "Ensuring the Safety of MPs and Parliamentary Staff", is both timely and essential. It reflects our shared commitment to guarantee a secure environment for our Members of Parliament and our parliamentary staff.

We recognize that safety is not merely a logistical necessity—it is a solemn duty to uphold the dignity of our parliament. Only within a secure environment can Members of Parliament carry out their legislative and oversight functions freely and effectively. Likewise, when adequately protected, our parliamentary staff are empowered to perform their essential duties with confidence, professionalism, and unwavering resolve.

Threats to safety are multifaceted—ranging from terrorism and political violence to cyberattacks, civil unrest, and even health crises such as

pandemics. Thus, there is a need for holistic approach to address these challenges – one that safeguards our parliaments physically, digitally, procedurally, and psychologically.

In the Philippines, we have demonstrated institutional adaptability. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the House of Representatives swiftly recalibrated its operations. On 23 March 2020, we convened the nation's first hybrid virtual session, ensuring legislative continuity while observing public health protocols. This

milestone affirmed that even in crisis, the legislature must— and can—remain functional and accountable.

Today, the House of Representatives maintains a comprehensive security framework to safeguard Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff. At its core is the Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, which maintains order across the session hall, galleries, offices, and premises—whether during plenary sessions, committee meetings, or other official activities. It is also responsible for enforcing House Rules, protecting lives, securing property, and maintaining the safety of all personnel and guests.

We recognize the urgent need to reinforce physical security—not only to deter external threats, but also to uphold public confidence in Congress as a safe and dignified institution. In response, the Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms has spearheaded key initiatives to boost the operational capacity of the Legislative Security Bureau and fortify security across the House of Representatives complex.

Foremost among these is the establishment of the House of Representatives Operations Center (HROC), equipped with over 400 CCTV cameras for 24/7 surveillance, monitoring, and rapid communication.

Access control systems have been upgraded to include biometric identification, metal detectors, and an Automated Visitor Management System to regulate entry to the premises.

Furthermore, the House also inaugurated its first Custodial Center—a secure, four-door detention facility with a 16-person capacity—designed to uphold both safety and the rights of those in custody.

In the digital domain, cybersecurity has been reinforced following a cyberattack on the House website in October 2023. Enhanced protocols aligned with the National Cybersecurity Plan now protect sensitive systems and ensure data privacy compliance.

Importantly, these safety measures are implemented without compromising transparency. Through regular risk assessments, anti-terrorism drills, and

security audits, the House remains vigilant and well-prepared to fulfill its mandate of serving the Filipino people.

Equally vital is health security. During the pandemic, the House launched the CongVax Program to facilitate contact tracing and deliver safe, efficient COVID-19 vaccinations.

The Medical and Dental Service continues to provide regular immunizations, including pneumonia, flu, and HPV shots, to support staff well-being. Complementing these efforts, blood pressure monitoring stations have been installed across all buildings to uphold occupational health standards and reinforce pandemic preparedness.

Together, these measures not only safeguard our workplace from immediate threats but also strengthen its resilience against future crises.

The safety of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff is essential to the stability of democratic institutions. By protecting those who serve, we help ensure that democratic processes remain uninterrupted, credible, and responsive to the people they represent.

Colleagues, while our parliaments differ in form and context, our mission is shared. Gatherings such as this allow us to exchange best practices, reaffirm solidarity, and renew our commitment to professionalism, inclusivity, and institutional excellence.

I look forward to continued dialogue, confident that our collaboration will mark another milestone in advancing partnerships and deepening our shared pursuit of democratic service.

Let us move forward with unified resolve—to safeguard the Members and staff who serve with dedication, so they may continue to uphold and protect the people we represent. Mabuhay, and maraming salamat po.

**Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia**, asked is there an opportunity for the parliamentarian themselves to make a contribution on the nature of the security arrangements that apply, in particular to the parliamentary precincts? He said in her experience, MPs appreciate being consulted on proposed changes to strengthen security arrangements.

**Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada**, noted the detention centre and asked what powers of arrest does the Sergeants of Arms have? Is it merely to detain difficult visitors, a form of temporary detention?

**Ms Cheloy E Velicaria-Garafil, Philippines**, replied that all the policies are created in consultation with MPs. She said the Congress of Philippines has an inherent power of contempt, it can compel witnesses to testify or hold them in contempt of meetings. This has been upheld by Supreme Court.



## THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

### 9. Communication by Mr Algirdas Stončaitis, Parliament of Lithuania, on 'AI as a Strategic Enabler: Transforming Processes, Skills and Technologies in Parliaments'

**Mr Algirdas Stončaitis**, presented the following communication:

Dear Colleagues,

Let me start with a quote from Franz Kafka, which seems to sound clearer today than ever before: 'From a certain point onward there is no longer any turning back.' We have reached a point where disengaging from AI technology is no longer an option. The path we choose must bring about change not only in technological frameworks, but also in the values that guide them.

When the first parliaments were established, they had no grand buildings, no plenary chambers, no microphones. But they possessed the most powerful tool of all – the belief that collective decision-making could change the world. This is how democracy was born: from the conviction that every voice matters, and every decision carries responsibility.

Democracy has withstood the rise and fall of empires, revolutions, wars, and industrial upheavals. Today, we stand at the threshold of a profound transformation – at the crossroads of the digital age – where not only humans, but also algorithms, can make decisions. AI is evolving faster than any technology before it. Today, we are entering a new phase – a transformation of the digital age – where AI is reshaping not only the tools we use, but also the very principles we employ for decision-making.

To put it in the words of the philosopher Heraclitus, 'The only constant is change.'

Today, the key question is no longer whether we will apply AI, but how.

How do we ensure that the principles of democracy remain intact in a world where decisions are made faster than they can be deliberated? How do we prevent parliaments from becoming passive observers of technological progress, and instead empower them to be active decision-makers deciding on the direction of change? How do we safeguard the human voice in decision-making, where automated systems increasingly take the lead? How do we protect legislation from the risks of technology, while still harnessing its potential? These are not technical questions –

they are strategic ones and require leadership. And parliaments must be institutions that lead the way.

We have discussed AI with parliaments across many EU countries, and the overwhelming consensus is clear: AI represents not only a significant opportunity, but also a potential threat – unless its deployment is deliberately and responsibly managed. In the Lithuanian Parliament, we have chosen a conscious strategic approach. Our first step is to identify the potential risks and threats posed by AI and establish mechanisms for managing them.

We recognise that every solution must be grounded not only in technological efficiency, but also in clear principles of responsibility, ethics, compliance with standards, and effective risk management. That is why our path began with responsible preparation. Instead of introducing the technology blindly, we chose to manage it. We did not start with tools – we began with processes. We mapped the core workflows: legislative cycles, committee activities, management of citizens' correspondence, translation and interpretation, and document circulation. We made sure each process has a designated owner, clearly defined inputs and outputs, and measurable quality indicators. High-value pilot projects are now underway – from summarising verbatim reports to scrutiny of legislative amendments for similarity and producing bilingual translations. We are also preparing for crisis scenarios through contingency planning: identifying priorities, managing information flows, and reinforcing legal oversight.

In the Lithuanian Parliament, we believe that technology should not be integrated into existing structures mechanically. We are taking a strategic approach. As a first step, we are rethinking the operational logic of the institution to ensure it can work effectively with AI – without losing what matters most: human-led decision-making, democratic control, and accountability. Rather than adapting AI to fit existing structures, we are reviewing those structures themselves – processes, responsibilities, and the distribution of competences – to enable targeted, responsible, and strategic use of AI potential.

With a systematic approach to innovation in mind, the Office of the Seimas has established the Strategy and Innovation Unit. It coordinates experimental initiatives, ensures methodological consistency, and strengthens cooperation with the academic community. In parallel, we have the Artificial Intelligence Oversight Commission that serves as an institutional one-stop-shop for risk assessment, recommendations, and guidelines for responsible implementation of AI. This ecosystem is supported by the transformation of the National Register of Legal Acts into an open, machine-readable data infrastructure – a resource for both research and technological innovation. All of this is built on a holistic approach to security: cybersecurity is

embedded across all layers of the architecture, from identity management and system segmentation to non-stop incident management.

People are our top investment priority. Because cutting-edge technologies are only as valuable as they are trusted, intuitive, user-friendly, and serve to create public value. Our goal is not to deploy technology, but to build institutional capacity. That is why we encourage learning and experimentation.

Our choice is clear: to expand knowledge, foster responsibility, and create an environment where progress is not a challenge, but the foundation for everyday action. We are at the beginning of an era shaped by artificial intelligence. This is not just a technological shift – it is the time for value-based decision-making.

We can act cautiously – or we can act consciously. We can react – or we can shape the future. The Office of the Seimas of Lithuania chooses to act. Not tomorrow – today. Not alone – with you. I invite you to join us on this journey. And I invite you to come to Vilnius – a city where parliamentary innovation leads to solutions.

**Ms Sarah Davies, UK**, asked whether the speaker could clarify the composition of the unit responsible for strategy and innovation, as well as that of the separate committee overseeing artificial intelligence. In particular, she wished to know whether MPs sat on these bodies and whether they were composed exclusively of digital specialists or whether they also included people from other backgrounds.

**Mr Algirdas Stončaitis, Lithuania**, stated that the Lithuanian Parliament and its administration do not treat issues of innovation and artificial intelligence separately.

He explained that Parliament follows global technological developments with great interest, thanks to close cooperation with the private sector, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, but emphasised that no technology should be implemented without a guarantee that it can be used securely.

He confirmed that a unit dedicated to strategy and innovation exists within his parliament's administration, tasked in particular with testing new technologies to assess how they might be utilised within Parliament.



## 10. Communication by Mr Farid Hajiyev, National Assembly of Azerbaijan on 'Innovative IT solutions in the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan'

**Mr Farid Hajiyev**, presented the following communication:

Distinguished colleagues!

Ladies and gentlemen!

First of all, allow me to extend, on behalf of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, my heartfelt greetings to each of you participating in the meeting of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments and to wish success to the work of our gathering. I believe that the topic chosen for discussion is highly relevant and falls within the sphere of interest of many professionals. This is because the subject concerns not only technological progress, but also new approaches to state activity and to the interaction between the state and society.

Today, information and communication technologies have become an integral part of the political, economic, and social life of humanity. Digital technologies influence people's livelihoods, public administration, international relations, in short, every sphere of life. Information that previously took weeks or months to transmit is now accessible in an instant. Modern digital tools create conditions for public institutions to operate with greater transparency and to engage more closely with citizens.

All of this holds particular significance for parliaments, as the parliament is the representative authority that forms the legislative framework of the state and determines the directions of societal development.

Dear colleagues!

Azerbaijan is among the countries that consistently and systematically develop the scope of digital activity. Large-scale state programs are being implemented in our country aimed at building a digital economy and an information society. The electronic government is being expanded, and within the framework of the "smart state" concept, services are being broadened and the accessibility of digital services for citizens is being increased.

The development of national ICT platforms and the extensive growth of internet services create favourable conditions for the application of innovations in the field of legislation and law-making.

Distinguished colleagues!

With your permission, I would like to highlight some of the information and communication technologies and information solutions implemented in the Parliament of Azerbaijan.

First of all, I would like to note that an electronic document circulation system has been established in the Parliament. This system ensures prompt and secure exchange of information between committees, Members of Parliament, and the Administration. As a result, the process of reviewing draft laws has become faster,

the handling of documents has been organized more efficiently, and the use of paper has been reduced to a minimum.

Modern electronic equipment has been installed in the plenary session hall for the registration of members and for voting. In addition, a software called the “OCS” (Online Conference System) has been developed in the Parliament to facilitate online meetings. During the COVID pandemic, several committee meetings were held using this system.

An electronic database of draft laws and normative acts has been established in the Milli Majlis. This database includes both legislative acts currently in force and draft laws under debates. Members of Parliament and staff of the Administration have real-time access to the database, which facilitates the preparation of analytical materials and ensures a systematic approach to legislative activity.

The webpage we have named “E-Stenogram” provides an accurate and prompt delivery of the speeches of MPs in indexed audio, audiovisual, and text formats. The page presents a list of draft laws and resolutions under discussion, along with the names of the MPs who have spoken on each item and the participants invited to the session. As soon as an MP’s speech in a plenary session concludes, it automatically becomes available in audio format within the system, while the audiovisual format of the speech is uploaded to the system one hour after the session ends.

The system offers a quick search function by the name of the Member of Parliament or by the matter under discussion. When searched by name, all speeches delivered by the MP are presented to the user in audio, audiovisual, and text formats. It is worth noting that the system has been operating since 2007.

A second solution, called “E-protocol,” presents the minutes of sessions in the form of a web page. The minutes reflect the meeting agenda, the name and surname of the presiding person, the starting time of the session, the titles of the drafts under discussion, the list of MPs who spoke on each item, the results of votes on those drafts, and other related information.

A mobile application meeting modern requirements has been developed in the Milli Majlis for iOS and Android operating systems, successfully passed security testing, and is now available for use by MPs and staff of the Administration. Through this application, they can view and study draft laws and their attached documents online. As a result of its integration with the electronic document circulation system, MPs are also able to familiarize themselves electronically with incoming requests.

Distinguished colleagues!

To conclude my speech, I would like to touch upon two issues that are relevant for all of us. The first issue is security, and the second is the continuous adaptation of MPs to innovations.

Of course, with certain exceptions taken into account, cooperation on general security matters can be effective. For example, the parliament faces challenges such as the need to replace rapidly evolving technologies and equipment. Retaining specialists in every field incurs significant costs. I believe that all parliaments encounter such and similar problems and seek solutions. This, indeed, has a considerable impact on security.

Moreover, as in many countries, parliamentary elections are held in our country every five years, and it takes time for newly elected MPs to adapt to and assimilate innovations. There are many issues involved here, and I am sure you are familiar with them as well.

Dear colleagues!

I do not wish to take much of your time. Here, I have tried to briefly present the experience of my country. The innovations, challenges, and objectives are the same, but the experiences differ. Therefore, I believe there is great value in sharing the advanced practices of countries and parliaments.

I am confident that the digital transformation of parliaments not only enhances the efficiency of their work but also increases society's trust in the institutions of authority and elevates the interaction between the state and its citizens to a new level. Thank you for your attention.

**Ms Le Thu Ha, Vietnam**, noted the example shows technology can be a great driver. She asked about the implications for parliamentary culture. In an increasingly data driven and technology dependent world, how can we ensure that digitalisation does not diminish the depth of debate, political reflections and representative role of MPs?

**Mr Farid Hajiyev, Azerbaijan**, said we cannot ensure the future of this topic, it is difficult to look forward and to understand what changes are coming. The world is moving very fast and parliaments and government must be a part of this change. We can control, to some extent, the speed of the digitalisation processes but also call on traditional solutions.



## 11. Communication by Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, House of Representatives of Thailand, on 'Parliament as an Agile Organization: An Innovative Framework for Modern Governance'

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

Mr. President,

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to present the Communication under the theme “In the news and innovations at the parliament” under the topic “Parliament as an Agile Organization: An innovative framework for Modern Governance”

### Introduction

Traditional parliamentary systems face mounting pressure to evolve beyond rigid, hierarchical structures in an era of rapid technological advancement and global challenges. The concept of parliament as an agile organization represents a transformative approach prioritizing flexibility, responsiveness, and result-oriented outcomes. This paradigm shift has gained particular urgency following COVID-19 and other crises demanding swift legislative responses.

Agile parliamentary governance serves critical purposes: creating public trust by demonstrating effective real-time responses to citizen needs, responding to uncertainty in an increasingly unpredictable environment, and enhancing crisis management capabilities while maintaining democratic accountability. Central to this transformation, the secretariat of parliament plays a pivotal role as the operational backbone enabling change, serving as the institutional bridge between political leadership and administrative execution.

### Core Principles and Implementation

The foundation of agile parliament rests on four adapted principles, with the secretariat serving as primary implementer across all dimensions.

First, prioritizing individuals and interactions over rigid processes empowers staff and representatives while fostering collaboration. The secretariat must facilitate these interactions by creating platforms for meaningful cross-boundary collaboration.

Second, working solutions over comprehensive documentation focuses on tangible policy outcomes rather than slow administrative processes. Here, the secretariat leads cultural transformation by redesigning workflows, simplifying procedures, and establishing outcome-based metrics prioritizing citizen impact over procedural compliance.

Third, customer collaboration over contract negotiation establishes continuous citizen engagement in co-designing legislation. The secretariat builds and maintains engagement mechanisms, ensuring citizen feedback is systematically incorporated into decision-making.

Finally, responding to change over following plans requires adaptive policymaking based on evolving circumstances. To achieve this, the secretariat must develop capabilities for rapid environmental scanning and adaptive planning enabling parliament to pivot quickly when needed.

Successful implementation requires cross-functional teams working across departments, with the secretariat providing coordination and institutional support. Digital transformation accelerates new service development, with the secretariat leading technology adoption while ensuring democratic participation remains central to all processes.

The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, Thailand: A showcase of an accomplished model of agile crisis response

Building on these theoretical foundations, the Secretariat of the House of Representatives, Thailand recently demonstrates successful agile implementation through its special taskforce responding to military tensions with a neighbouring country. This crisis created widespread public distrust and disinformation challenges, requiring the taskforce to conduct comprehensive fact-checking operations and provide accurate, timely information to citizens.

The taskforce eliminated traditional departmental barriers by creating flat organizational structures where research, communications, IT, and public relations staff.

worked together without hierarchical constraints. The secretariat leadership bypassed complex command chains, empowering direct decision-making authority that reduced response times from weeks to hours. This approach operated with data-driven analysis providing real-time insights, deployed digital platforms for citizen engagement, and demonstrated that parliamentary institutions could maintain democratic accountability while operating with private-sector speed and agility.

The crisis demanded unprecedented speed in the secretariat's response while preserving democratic representation. This rapid responsiveness to public concerns, combined with transparent processes, reinforced parliament's legitimacy and built essential public trust during uncertainty. Importantly, the secretariat's facilitation of real-time stakeholder feedback on emergency measures demonstrated that effective representation could be maintained even when procedures required adaptation, creating strengthened democratic engagement that extended beyond the immediate crisis.

This successful transformation depended on secretariat leadership operating effectively under uncertainty, making decisions with incomplete information and adapting strategies based on real-time feedback. Leaders shifted from risk-averse bureaucratic management to entrepreneurial problem-solving, becoming comfortable with experimentation and rapid iteration. Simultaneously, this accomplished model drove innovative organizational transformation as the secretariat rapidly reoriented staff in new technologies, collaborative methods, and data analysis needed for digital forensics and social media monitoring. Staff developed multi-functional capabilities rather than narrow specializations, creating permanent organizational assets that enhance parliamentary capabilities beyond crisis response.

### Conclusion

Thailand's agile showcase demonstrates that parliamentary institutions can achieve innovation through speed and effectiveness when they break down silos, foster stakeholder cooperation, and invest in human resource development. These transformations deliver increased responsiveness, improved efficiency, and enhanced citizen engagement that strengthens democratic legitimacy. However, success requires sustained political will, fundamental cultural shifts led by capable secretariats, and careful integration of agile methods that preserve democratic safeguards. The path towards agile parliamentary governance offers significant promise for enhancing democratic effectiveness, provided transformation efforts are grounded in democratic principles and focused on genuine citizen service improvement.

**Mr Giovanni BRAVO RODRIGUEZ, Ecuador**, do you use any AI in your process? Do you have a way of responding to citizens questions? Can you measure this in hours or days?

**Ms Le Thu HA, Vietnam**, asked does the legal structure in Thailand allow such adaptations or is a new legal architecture required? How is the role of MP defined in this model to ensure oversight function is fully preserved? Once immediate crisis has passed, how do we sustain the spirit of innovation?

**Mr Mohammed DADA, Algeria**, asked what types of questions do citizens ask, which ones come up the most?

**Mr Gabriel MALEBANG, Botswana**, noted that parliaments are generally conservative and ritualistic institutions. He asked how far can you really go in embracing private sector driven models and ideas of innovation without upsetting the established conventions or norms of parliamentary culture? Did you face resistance to this change or innovation for implementing tools from the private sector?

**Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Thailand**, responded to Ecuador that they do use AI in processes. The taskforce was only just setup but during the process they have used ChatGPT and sourced information via social media.

In response to Vietnam, she asked permission from the President and explained the situation and asked to setup a taskforce which speeded up the decision-making. It is not a legal framework that supports it but an authorisation direct from president.

With regards to the role of MPs in taskforce, she said it is only officials from parliament, but they update the MPs on progress and get feedback. Sometimes the MPs tell us what they would like to know more about.

In response to Algeria, she said the feedback is from social media it is not like direct letters or feedback. She said people are happy to see parliament are doing something.

In response to Botswana, she said she doesn't know if this is a sustainable project, it is brand new but once they have a model they can keep experimenting and let the ASGP know at the next meeting. She concluded by agreeing that members are used to a certain way of behaving and don't like change, but she said Secretary Generals can have a will to change and push for the benefits of this change.



## 12. Announcement regarding the election

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, announced four candidates for the three vacant positions as ordinary member of the Executive Committee:

- Mr Mohammed ALBUAINAIN, Secretary General of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain
- Mr Salim DJALAL, Secretary General of the National People's Assembly of Algeria
- Ms Le Thu Ha, Vice Chair of the Office of the National Assembly of Viet Nam
- Mr Viacheslav SHTUCHNYI, Secretary General of the Parliament of Ukraine

He informed the Association an election would be held during the afternoon session and that each candidate would have three minutes to present their candidacy.

### 13. Concluding remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** thanked all members for participating and reminded colleagues to return at 14.30.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12:30 PM

# FOURTH SITTING

Tuesday 21 October 2025 (afternoon)

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 2.30PM

## 1. Introductory remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** welcomed everyone back to the fourth sitting of the ASGP.

## 2. New member

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** proposed Ms Esther Kaapanda, Secretary of the National Assembly of Namibia, for membership of the Association.

The Association approved.

## 3. Election

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** invited the four candidates to briefly introduce themselves to the Association and speak in support of their candidacy.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** then outlined the process for the election.

*\*\*\* The session was suspended for 15-minutes during the vote \*\*\**

*The count took place in the office of the President with Dr Jose Pedro Montero (President), Mr Georg Kleemann (Vice-President), Mr Omar Alnuaimi (Executive Committee), Alice Lala (Joint Secretary) and Elektra Garvie-Adams (Joint Secretary) administering the election (ASGP bureau).*

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** announced the election results:

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Number of votes cast             | 71       |
| Abstentions                      | 0        |
| Spoilt ballots                   | 1        |
| Mr Mohammed ALBUAINAIN (Bahrain) | 39 votes |
| Mr Salim DJALAL (Algeria)        | 40 votes |

|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Ms Le Thu HA (Vietnam)            | 48 votes |
| Dr Viacheslav SHTUCHNYI (Ukraine) | 31 votes |

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, announced that Mr Mohammed ALBUAINAIN (Bahrain), Mr Salim DJALAL (Algeria) and Ms Le Thu HA (Vietnam) were elected as ordinary members of the Executive Committee. He specified that their term of office would commence, for a period of three years, on the day following the close of the Geneva session, 23 October 2025, in accordance with Article 18(11) of the Association’s Rules of Procedure.



### 3. GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: How does your parliament provide factual information to parliamentarians to support evidence-based decision-making?

**Mr Omar Alnuaimi**, opened the debate by emphasising that parliamentary work now relies not only on political debate, but also on data and studies, which form an essential basis for legislative and oversight activities. In this context, he argued that the general secretariats can no longer be viewed merely as administrative support structures, as they possess research, analytical and documentation capabilities.

- What training and development opportunities are provided for parliamentary staff?
- Do you have a library or specialist team in parliament which advises Members on statistics, fact or policy?
- Does your parliament work in partnership with external bodies (media, fact checkers, academic institutions) to address misinformation?
- How do you decide what information to provide to parliamentarians? Is information provided in response to demand from Members or does each piece of legislation have a standard package of accompanying information?
- What proactive measures has your parliament taken to combat misinformation that could affect parliamentary debate or public confidence?

*\*\*\*The members divided into 5 language-based groups - English, French, Arabic and Spanish/Portuguese - to discuss the general debate topic. \*\*\**

*\*\*Each group nominated a rapporteur to give a speech reflecting on the group discussion to the main plenary. \*\**

*\* The following individuals were nominated as rapporteurs. Claressa Surtees (Australia) and Ms Le Thu HA (Vietnam) represented the English-speaking groups. Mr Salim Djalal (Algeria) represented the Arab-speaking group. Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu (Canada) represented the French speaking group. Ms Susanna Martins (Portugal) represented the Portuguese/Spanish speaking group. \**

#### 4. Announcement relating to Spanish and Arabic interpretation

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, announced that the Executive Committee has received a proposal to change the Association's working practices. He invited Mr Philippe Schwab, former President of the Association to present his proposal.

**Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland**, stated that he had proposed to the Executive Committee that the Association's Rules of Procedure be amended with regard to interpretation at meetings, which is currently provided only in English and French.

He considered that this rule constituted a significant restriction on members' ability to express themselves and interact with one another, as some members were unable to contribute fully to discussions due to the language barrier. He recalled that, to partially address this difficulty, informal discussion groups had been set up, enabling Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese speakers in particular to express themselves more freely and share their experiences. In his view, the results of this initiative had been encouraging.

In this context, he proposed exploring the possibility of extending simultaneous interpretation to Arabic and Spanish, in addition to English and French, in order to align the ASGP's practices with those of the IPU. He considered that such a development would improve the quality and representativeness of the debates and encourage broader participation.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President** informed the Association that the IPU has offered to financially support Arabic and Spanish interpretation in the medium term. He announced that the Istanbul session would be a trial of the proposed change in working practices. He concluded that, after Istanbul, the Association would need to decide if the trial is a success and whether to make the change permanent.

#### 5. Concluding remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, closed the sitting and reminded members that the session would recommence at 10am tomorrow. He closed the sitting.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 18:00

## FIFTH SITTING

Wednesday 22 October 2025 (morning)

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, in the Chair

—

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 10AM

### 1. Introductory remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, welcomed everyone back for the last day of the conference.

### 2. Update on the work of the Centre for Innovation in Parliament, Mr Andy Richardson

**Mr Andy Richardson** presented the work of the innovation centre in relation to artificial intelligence. [His speaking notes are available on the ASGP website here.](#)

## THEME: PREPARING FOR THE RETIREMENT OF LONG-SERVING STAFF'

### 4. Communication by Mr Abdualla Mussa, Parliament of Libya

**Mr Abdualla Mussa** spoke as follows:

His Excellency Dr. José Pedro  
President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments  
Your Excellencies, esteemed colleagues: Secretaries General of National  
Parliaments  
Peace be upon you.

At the outset of this address, I am pleased to extend to you all my sincere greetings and appreciation, and to speak on a matter of great importance that lies at the heart of human resource management "preparing for the retirement of long-serving staff". This phase represents a pivotal milestone in the career of an individual who has dedicated years of service to their nation and institution.

Retirement is not merely the end of a professional journey; it marks the beginning of a new chapter of contribution in various forms. It requires institutions to engage in early preparation and meticulous planning to ensure a balance between the interests of the staff and the needs of the institution. Proper preparation for this stage goes beyond administrative or financial aspects; it encompasses psychological, social, and cognitive dimensions that support the staff in transitioning smoothly into post-employment life.

Long-serving staff are the backbone of any institution. They possess accumulated experience and deep knowledge of internal procedures and workflows. Therefore, early preparation for their retirement reflects institutional maturity and awareness of the importance of performance sustainability and knowledge transfer to future generations. It also helps prevent skill gaps that may disrupt operations. Preparing for retirement is a shared responsibility between the individual, the institution, and the state, within the framework of legal and regulatory compliance. It involves providing necessary support and guidance, ensuring a smooth transfer of knowledge and expertise, maintaining operational continuity at a high level of efficiency, and upholding the rights of retirees. Honouring their contributions is both a national duty and a moral obligation.

Includes The Following Stages:

First: The Pre-Retirement Preparation Stage

- Determining the expected retirement date for each staff and notifying them well in advance of reaching the legal retirement age.
- Conducting a study to assess the future needs of the administration, department, or unit following the staff retirement.
- Preparing all administrative and social security files, and ensuring that all required data and documentation are completed prior to the referral date, in order to avoid any delays in the staff financial and legal entitlements.

### Second: The Referral Stage to the Social Security Fund

The State of Libya has given special importance to this stage by enacting Law No. (13) of 1980 concerning social security, under which the Social Security Fund was established as a legal entity with independent financial standing. This fund was created to serve as a social safety net that guarantees a dignified life for staff after retirement or in cases of hardship.

The fund plays a pivotal role in supporting individuals by disbursing pensions to those who have reached retirement age or whose service has ended due to disability. It also provides compensation for work-related injuries and occupational diseases, and secures the families of contributors in cases of death or permanent disability of the breadwinner. Additionally, the fund contributes to covering medical expenses and health support for certain groups, and offers assistance and soft loans in specific cases. These measures enhance both economic and social stability by protecting citizens from the risks of poverty or loss of income due to retirement, illness, or death. To keep pace with changing living conditions, the law has been amended on several occasions to include increases in pensions, thereby improving the situation of retirees and addressing the rising cost of living. In this context, the files of retiring staff are regularly referred to the fund, with all required documents duly completed, to ensure that retirees receive their full entitlements without delay.

### Third: The Post-Retirement Phase and Communication with the Institution

The post-retirement phase does not mean complete separation from the institution. However, it can become a bridge for future cooperation by leveraging their expertise as advisors, involving them in training programs or workshops to pass on their expertise to new generations, and keeping communication channels open between them and the institution to ensure the continuity of professional and human relationships. Official celebrations can be organized upon their retirement

to express gratitude for their efforts and encourage loyalty and dedication from other staff.

Finally, preparing for the retirement of long-serving staff is not merely an administrative procedure; it is a long-term investment in the stability of the institution. Hence, the importance of developing integrated policies that foster a culture of loyalty and giving within the parliamentary work environment and sustain its expertise through advance planning, knowledge transfer, and psychological and social support. This way, we can ensure continued high-efficiency performance and celebrate the contributions of long-serving staff in a manner befitting their efforts and contributions.

Thank you for listening, and I hope we will all work together to develop effective strategic plans to manage this vital stage in the life of the institution and its staff.

**Mr Masibulele Xaso, South Africa**, asked whether there was a retirement preparation scheme in place in Libya designed to organise the replacement of staff and ensure the continuity of their duties.

**Mr Said Mokadem, Maghreb Consultative Council**, asked for further details regarding early retirement in Libya, wishing to know whether it was voluntary or compulsory, particularly in the event of job cuts.

**Mr Abdulla Mussa, Libya**, stated that a retirement preparation scheme had been put in place in advance, including studies on departmental needs, in order to plan for the replacement of staff and ensure the continuity of operations.

In response to the second question, he explained that in Libya, the legal framework provides for two forms of retirement: retirement at the statutory age set by law, and early retirement, which is at the employee's discretion after a certain number of years of service, regardless of their age.



## 5. Communication by Mr Jaime Matias, Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique

**Mr Jaime Matias**, presented the following communication:

Dear Secretary-Generals;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great honour and enormous satisfaction that I, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, who, due to last-minute

commitments arising from the national parliamentary agenda, was unable to attend this meeting, I address you in this meeting.

Shortly after learning that the ASGP Autumn Session was to be held in the beautiful city of Geneva, the Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique proposed to give a presentation entitled “Retirement of parliamentary officials versus institutional stability in the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique,” within the broader theme of “Preparing for the retirement of officials with many years of service.”.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that, in the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, the process of replacing employees with many years of service who have reached retirement age is prepared well in advance, given that it is a legal requirement that anyone who reaches the age of 60 must retire. Within this framework, the General Secretariat of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, through its Parliamentary Studies and Training Center, in coordination with the Human Resources Division, guided by the established Human Resources Development Plan, develops ongoing training and capacity-building programs for its employees, with a view to ensuring the necessary continuity of processes when employees reach retirement age.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although this approach represents an excellent platform for ensuring institutional stability, it is the understanding of the Mozambican Parliament's Management that the exchange of experiences is of paramount importance in the context of continuously improving the quality of services provided to Members of Parliament.

Therefore, the Secretariat-General has been continuously committed to training its staff, both in the context of bilateral cooperation, based on agreements with similar institutions in other countries, with greater emphasis on Angola, Brazil, and Portugal, but also by sending them to attend short term training courses and participate in thematic seminars on different areas of parliamentary activity, within the scope of its membership in numerous interparliamentary organizations.

However, as expected, the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique faces some challenges in terms of human resources, the most significant of which, with regard to the issue of “Retirement of parliamentary officials versus institutional stability,” is the fact that the law only allows one new hire for every three open positions on the staff for termination of employment.

Given this major challenge, and in light of the need for institutional stability, the Secretariat-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique seeks to continuously and permanently enhance the capabilities of its staff, so that everyone

is capable of doing everything. In other words, it is our goal that the withdrawal of an employee be quickly mitigated through internal mobility, from one sector to another, while employees seconded from other institutions are trained.

Mr. President of the ASGP, Secretaries-General, distinguished colleagues, this is all that I have been asked to convey by the Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, under the important theme “Preparing for the retirement of long-serving civil servants,” sharing the experience of our Secretariat-General. Thank you so much for your kind attention.

**Mr Xaso, South Africa**, asked whether Mozambique has a training institute or academy for parliamentary or government officials? He said this was linked to the need to develop officers to take over from individuals retiring to ensure institutional memory.

**Ms Sarah Davies, UK**, noted that from an organisation perspective, great challenges arise when a senior member of staff has held a senior role for over 5 years because when they retire it often leaves a huge gap. She said the Commons tries to ensure no-one holds these very senior roles for more than 5 years, so there will be other people in the organisation who has held a role.

**Mr Said Mokadem, Maghreb Consultative Council**, asked whether Mozambique parliament has independent from general role of the state, or is their a specific law for parliamentary staff. Is there an annual plan to manage human resource. Do you have an independent fund for the retirement of staff?

**Mr Najib El Khadi, Morocco**, noted the importance of the topic, he said institutional, we are all aware of the fundamental role of parliamentary administration in supporting staff in their work. In Morocco parliament, we try to meet this concern, seek to develop and produce various guides to different operations relating to how parliamentary work is organised in all fields; logistics, human resources, finance, diplomacy, law-making, assessment of public policy.

There are provisions which govern these areas of work in all parliaments, internal rules and regulations, also practices around innovations and institutional knowledge. A very valuable asset we must pay great attention to in order to preserve and consolidate. Guides and handbooks can ensure all administrative process are traceable and recorded. We should think about smooth knowledge transfer from 1 generation to the next. Would it be useful to have, alongside each official, an assistant being trained up to take on the role.

**Ms Valérie Simporé Soubeiga, Burkina Faso**, pointed out that retirements were difficult to manage within her parliament, particularly because of the loss of

income they entail for staff members. She explained that this situation created a tense atmosphere surrounding retirement.

She noted that managing these situations was all the more complex because the options for extending or retaining staff had been restricted and replacements were not always guaranteed, which kept some staff members hoping to remain in post.

In this context, she enquired about practices in other countries, asking whether similar experiences existed elsewhere and how these difficulties relating to the human and social management of retirement were being addressed.

**Mr Ismael BOUDINE, Djibouti**, said that in some countries there is not a great wealth of human resources. Sometimes the Executive branch is in competition with legislative branch. Sometimes a difficult decision about whether to retire a person who is in post because there is not enough skilled talent in the market, the person is not replaceable, but legislation requires that they require. He gave the example of a tax specialist who had worked for 6 or 7 years for the budget committee. He wanted to hear how other countries get the right skills and expertise in the recruitment market?

**Mr Ahmed Manna, Egypt**, said that in Egypt retirement is a natural evolution when employees reach a certain age. He asked whether in Mozambique there is a specific system? He said while some expertise is difficult to replace, new ideas are also important. He said Egypt has special regulations which govern the retirement and mean a person retiring can be hired under different conditions, after retirement age, to draw on their expert knowledge. Renewal is year by year.

**Mr Jaime Matias, Mozambique**, in response to South Africa, he said there is a centre of studies which provide for all division of human resources. In response to UK, yes experience can be transmitted in different ways. Less than a month ago, he had a grouping of retired people advise younger staff. He said there is 48 members of this group which will be a great tool for knowledge communication. On retirement, he responded to Egypt that they do not have an extension process but a contracting form for this purpose.

**Mr Ahmed Manna, Egypt**, asked whether he meant a renewal mechanism for 5 years only or whether it is possible for 1 year only?

**Mr Jaime Matias, Mozambique**, responded that in the law retirement means the relationship with the state should end. However, if we need to keep him working, we can hire him for 5 years. The retired group helps guarantee institutional memory is kept.

In response to Mr Mokadem, he said there is an independent system for the staff of the Assembly. He said human resources are managed globally for parliamentary staff.

In response to Morocco, he noted the issues are linked. To Burkina Faso, he said the assembly has worked hard to improve communication with the person scheduled for retirement. To Djibouti, he said the hiring situation can be difficult and that is why they hire retired people and also external consultants to tackle the problem of skills gaps.



## 6. Communication by Pedro Agostinho de Neri, National Assembly of Angola

**Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri** spoke as follows:

Mr. José Pedro MONTERO, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP); Distinguished Members of the ASGP Executive Committee;

Dear Secretary-Generals;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great honor and enormous satisfaction that I, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, who, due to last-minute commitments arising from the national parliamentary agenda, was unable to attend this meeting, I address you in this meeting.

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Within this framework, the General Secretariat of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, through its Parliamentary Studies and Training Center, in coordination with the Human Resources Division, guided by the established Human Resources Development Plan, develops ongoing training and capacity-building programs for its employees, with a view to ensuring the necessary continuity of processes when employees reach retirement age.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although this approach represents an excellent platform for ensuring institutional stability, it is the understanding of the Mozambican Parliament's Management that the exchange of experiences is of paramount importance in the context of continuously improving the quality of services provided to Members of Parliament. Therefore, the Secretariat-General has been continuously committed to training its staff, both in the context of bilateral cooperation, based on agreements with similar institutions in other countries, with greater emphasis on Angola, Brazil, and Portugal, but also by sending them to attend short term training courses and participate in thematic seminars on 1 different areas of parliamentary activity, within the scope of its membership in numerous interparliamentary organizations.

However, as expected, the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique faces some challenges in terms of human resources, the most significant of which, with regard to the issue of "Retirement of parliamentary officials versus institutional stability," is the fact that the law only allows one new hire for every three open positions on the staff for termination of employment.

Given this major challenge, and in light of the need for institutional stability, the Secretariat-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique seeks to continuously and permanently enhance the capabilities of its staff, so that everyone is capable of doing everything. In other words, it is our goal that the withdrawal of an employee be quickly mitigated through internal mobility, from one sector to another, while employees seconded from other institutions are trained. Mr. President of the ASGP, Secretaries-General, distinguished colleagues, this is all that I have been asked to convey by the Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, under the important theme "Preparing for the retirement of long serving civil servants," sharing the experience of our Secretariat-General. Thank you so much for your kind attention.

**Mr Ingvar Mattson, Sweden,** asked for clarification on the funding of the parliamentary administration's pension scheme, wishing to know whether it was entirely covered by the parliamentary administration's budget or whether it formed part of a wider pension scheme applicable to all civil servants.

He also raised the issue of the retirement age, stating that he understood it to be set at 60, with options for early retirement. Considering this age to be relatively low, he asked whether any consideration was being given to a possible increase in the retirement age, particularly in view of the financial cost of the system.

**Mr Pedro de Neri, Angola,** He pointed out that civil servants are covered by the National Insurance scheme, and that a supplementary fund had been set up within Parliament to allow staff who so wish to make additional contributions. This fund, managed by a bank, is intended to supplement the benefits provided by the National Insurance scheme. Contributions to this supplementary fund are voluntary.

On the issue of retirement age, he acknowledged that 60, or even 50, was a relatively low age. He emphasised, however, that demographic realities differed from country to country: in Europe, life expectancy is higher than in sub-Saharan Africa, where reaching the age of 80 remains exceptional.

He noted that a debate was currently underway regarding the retirement age. Employees can currently retire after 35 years of service, regardless of their age, but this provision is currently under review as it leads to a loss of expertise within the civil service.

To address this, a parliamentary academy has been established, bringing together former parliamentary staff to train and mentor younger civil servants as part of a continuous professional development programme. Former MPs may also take part. In this way, Parliament seeks to retain the expertise and experience of these individuals by involving them in training and mentoring activities.

**Mr Xolile George, South Africa**, asked whether there are thresholds on the amount of input from the Parliament for the retirement plan and the post tenure welfare plan? Do you consider whether the number of children a person has might play a role in early retirement decisions?

**Mr Kamoru OGUNLANA, Nigeria**, asked about the conditions of service for parliamentary staff and the Secretary General of the Angola Parliament. Is it the same conditions as for government or other public sector employees?

**Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri, Angola**, to Nigeria he said there is no specific treatment for parliamentary employees over other public sector employees. To south Africa, he said contributions from the parliament are proportionate the salary and length of service. The same system is used for all public servants. He also said that civil servants, post-retirement, are not forgotten, their emotional and health are supported to their last breath, as well as for their children. There are also social activities for retirees such as a football team and a choir.



## THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

### 7. Communication by Mr Kalipha MM Mbye, Statement of the Clerk of the National Assembly of The Gambia

**Mr Kalipha MM Mbye** presented the following communication:

Mr Chair,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Parliaments across the world are confronted with a common challenge: how to remain relevant, effective, and trusted in an era where citizens demand not only representation, but also openness, accountability, and innovation.

In The Gambia, this challenge has compelled us to rethink long-standing practices, to design new approaches rooted in our constitutional mandate, and to experiment with ways of making Parliament not merely an institution of laws, but an institution of the people.

It is in this spirit that I share with you some of the innovations recently introduced by the National Assembly of The Gambia under the theme “In the News and Innovations at Parliament.” Though modest in scale, these reforms have already had a transformative impact on how we conduct oversight, engage with citizens, and shape the future of our institution.

One striking example is the work of the Special Select Committee of Inquiry into the sale and disposal of assets belonging to the former President, Yahya AJJ Jammeh, and his associates. Here, we departed from the conventional practice in which only Members questioned witnesses, while staff remained in the background. Instead, we adopted a dynamic, commission-style format where counsels led the direct examination of witnesses before Members intervened. Anchored in constitutional authority that empowers Parliament to determine its own procedures, this model strengthened the process and reinforced public confidence in the credibility of Parliament. Questioning has become more rigorous, evidence-based, and legally robust, while Members retain their critical role in clarifying and drawing policy conclusions. This innovative approach has proven both effective and efficient, and we commend it to colleagues as a practice adaptable to other legislatures seeking to sharpen their investigative capacity.

Equally significant is our Outreach Programme, which takes Parliament beyond its chamber and places it directly among the people it serves. Each year, one constituency is selected, and the entire Assembly relocates there for open engagement. Citizens from 3 across the country participate, and Members respond directly to their concerns in a transparent forum. This practice has deepened accountability, fostered trust, and affirmed Parliament’s legitimacy as a people-centred institution. We commend it as a powerful model of participatory democracy.

We have also institutionalised annual Senior Management–Members interface sessions. These provide a candid space for dialogue: Members reflect on the services they receive, while staff share perspectives on how Members’ expectations shape delivery. Far from being routine, these sessions have become a cornerstone of institutional growth, building cohesion, improving efficiency, and nurturing a culture of mutual respect and accountability.

Finally, our Strategic Plan provides a clear roadmap for institutional development. While strategic frameworks are common in legislatures, ours stands out in its deliberate focus on donor engagement. By aligning external support with nationally defined priorities, it ensures predictability, coherence, and sustainability in capacity-building. It is not simply a reform blueprint, but a living instrument for partnership and progress.

Mr Chair, distinguished colleagues,

The journey of the National Assembly of The Gambia demonstrates that innovation in parliamentary practice is not a luxury, but a necessity. By refining our procedures, opening ourselves to the people, and charting a deliberate course for institutional growth, we are building a Parliament that is resilient, responsive, and firmly anchored in constitutional legitimacy. We hope that our experiences can inspire deeper dialogue among us, as together we shape parliaments capable of meeting the aspirations of our peoples in the twenty-first century. I thank you

**Mr Kamoru OGUNLANA, Nigeria**, asked what criteria were used to select or appoint the members of the committees tasked with assisting the commissions of inquiry.

**Mr Masibulele Xaso, South Africa**, a demandé si les recommandations issues du programme de proximité faisaient l’objet d’un débat au Parlement, en séance ou en commission.

**Mr Ismael BOUDINE, Djibouti**, wanted further details about the dialogue sessions between MPs and the parliamentary administration. He asked whether the purpose of the meetings was solely to improve procedures and working methods, or whether they addressed the needs and expectations of MPs more broadly.

**Mr Said Mokadem, Maghreb Consultative Council**, noted the issue of consolidating democracy, and the improvement done to parliament, asked to elaborate on events with civil society. When it comes to direct democratic participation, it usually happens at the level of committees?

**M. Kalipha MM Mbye, The Gambia**, in response to Nigeria's question, he stated that the Gambian Parliament made a team of legal experts available to committees of inquiry, emphasising the value of their technical expertise, particularly in conducting interviews. He clarified, however, that this team, which assists during hearings, is at the service of parliamentarians, who remain free to intervene at any time.

He noted that some training courses are organised by Parliament itself, whilst others involve external partners. Training needs are regularly assessed in order to identify gaps and adapt the programmes on offer.

Regarding outreach programmes, he explained that the role of the parliamentary administration is to facilitate dialogue between parliamentarians and citizens. Meetings organised in this context are the subject of reports aimed at identifying ways to improve the functioning of Parliament.

Finally, he noted that an annual exchange is organised between parliamentarians and the parliamentary administration's management. These meetings are held in private and allow both parties to voice their concerns. In his view, this dialogue has helped to reduce misunderstandings between the administration and parliamentarians.



## 8. Communication by Mr Ahmed Manna, House of Representatives of Egypt, 'In the news and innovations at parliament'

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

Hon. Mr. José Pedro MONTERO, President of the ASGP,  
Distinguished Secretaries-General,  
Excellencies,

It gives me pleasure and honor to participate again in this prestigious global gathering of Secretaries-General of Parliaments. In this context, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the President of ASGP and its Secretariat for their commendable efforts to ensure that our meetings proceed as expected, thereby guaranteeing our communication and the exchange of visions and experiences in serving our parliaments and peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In light of the qualitative leaps our contemporary world is witnessing in various fields, especially those related to the tremendous revolution in harnessing technology to facilitate human life and manage daily activities, parliaments face the challenge of keeping pace with these technological advancements, regarding the citizens' expectations of their representatives in parliament. The development of parliamentary innovation is therefore an urgent necessity, considering that it is one of the key pillars of institutional parliamentary performance development, ensuring the use of new ideas, modern technologies, and innovative administrative methods to promote the performance of the parliamentary institution in terms of legislation, oversight, and citizen representation, as well as technical, administrative, communication, and institutional innovations that promote the effectiveness of Parliament and help determine the best policies and legislation necessary to meet society's needs.

Distinguished colleagues,

Digital transformation and artificial intelligence are the cornerstones of parliamentary innovation and development. In this regard, the Egyptian House of Representatives has kept in mind developing an integrated strategy to achieve digital transformation in all parliamentary activities, in line with the Egyptian state's direction towards building a new republic based on technology and digital governance, in accordance with Egypt's Vision 2030 for sustainable development. It aims to improve the performance of state institutions in general, enhance their work efficiency, and foster transparency and participation. The General Secretariat of the Egyptian House of Representatives has been keen to develop the methodology and mechanism of work inside the Parliament in a way that keeps pace with the modern technological revolution, coinciding with the move of the House to its new headquarters in the New Administrative Capital, which is considered one of the smart cities. The House of Representatives Information Center has adopted an e-parliament work system as well as digital transformation via information technology tools and techniques, and artificial intelligence applications. The achievements in this field during the period from 2020 to 2025 can be summarized as follows:

- Developing the application for communication between the House members and the General Secretariat (concerning the addition of their amendments to draft laws submitted to the House during the plenary session), which achieved great success in clarifying the vision and directions before discussing the draft law.
- Developing an electronic application for employees and pensioners that allows them to use all services provided by the Secretariat electronically without the need to go to the workplace, such as vacations, official permits, requests for obtaining medication, and requests for transfer to hospitals in emergency cases. This

application has had a significant impact, particularly on pensioners, saving them the effort of going to Parliament headquarters to obtain their medication, especially after Parliament moved to the New Administrative Capital.

- Using some artificial intelligence tools in Parliamentary work, such as:
  1. Using cameras that move to follow the speaker during parliamentary committee meetings.
  2. Using digital portals and connecting them to MPs' databases so as to track attendance at plenary sessions, speakers, and those proposing amendments to draft laws, along with a comprehensive overview of any situation related to MPs' presence in Parliament.
  3. Implementing a digital system for MPs that includes all the state's legislation to view the historical stages of the law being researched.
- Establishing advanced data centres that adhere to modern security standards to ensure information integrity and establishing early warning systems for continuous assessment of AI risks.

Dear guests,

Amid these rapid changes at all levels and given that parliaments will always remain a safe haven for people and a guarantee of participation and decision-making in all its forms, enhancing the efficiency of parliamentary work is no longer a luxury, but rather an urgent necessity imposed by the aforementioned changes. This requires us, the Secretaries-General of Parliaments, to undertake diligent and institutional efforts to ensure the appropriate environment for our parliaments to fulfill their pivotal role in promoting peace and societal stability, carrying the burden of fulfilling people's aspirations and addressing their concerns. In light of the above, parliamentary innovation should not remain confined to individual, unorganized initiatives. Rather, centers for parliamentary innovation should be established within the general secretariats of our parliaments, comprising a multidisciplinary team entrusted with leading efforts to develop parliamentary work effectively and efficiently, ensuring the sustainability of parliamentary innovation as a fundamental pillar of modernization within parliaments. Thank you for your kind attention, and I wish our meetings every success.



**Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada**, highlighted the progress made in developing applications designed to improve communication between MPs, the General Secretariat and the administrative services, notably incorporating artificial intelligence tools.

Given the specific nature of parliamentary procedures and rules, he wished to know how these tools had been developed, in particular whether they had been

designed in-house by specialist teams within the Egyptian Parliament or whether they were the result of using external service providers or solutions purchased on the market.

**Mr Ahmed Manna, Egypt,** stated that the Egyptian Parliament had endeavoured to recruit specialists capable of developing digital tools tailored to the specific needs of parliamentary work, and that this recruitment had enabled most of the tools presented to be developed in-house. He noted, however, that where specific technical skills were required, engineers or specialist firms could be called upon on an ad hoc basis for specific projects.

By way of example, he mentioned the implementation of a digital system designed to facilitate the induction of new MPs. Whereas data registration was previously carried out on paper and could take up to an hour, an online system has been developed in-house: a link is now sent to elected MPs so that they can enter their details before their arrival, which allows the onboarding formalities to be completed very quickly when they arrive at Parliament.

## 9. Budget

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** informed the Association it must formally adopt the budget of the Association. He said the income and costs of the Association in 2026 will be the same as in 2025. He said the Association has a stable income from membership fees and stable costs.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** asked the Association to approve the budget.

The budget was approved.



## 10. Elections at the next session

**President José Pedro Montero** announced that, at the Istanbul session, a Vice-President (to replace Dr Remco Nehmelman proactively) and an ordinary member of the Executive Committee (to replace Dr Omar Al-Nuaimi ahead of schedule) would be elected. He thanked Mr Amadou Thimbo, whose term on the Executive Committee will end after this session, for his commitment.

## 11. Orders of the day for the spring session 2026

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, recalled that yesterday each of the 5 language-based groups were asked to suggest topics for the next session in Istanbul. He thanked colleagues for all their excellent ideas. He informed the Association that the Executive Committee had transformed their suggestions into the following 3 general debates:

1. The role of parliamentary administration in measuring the legislative impact of laws [small group discussion]
2. How do we strengthen the protection of parliament as a democratic institution? [small group discussion]
3. Does your parliament allow its staff to undertake remote working? [open debate]

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President** then announced 3 themes:

1. How are Secretary Generals appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
2. Presentation of concrete examples of the use of artificial intelligence within Parliaments
3. In the news and innovations at Parliament

**Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada**, spoke in favour of the format of general debates in small discussion group and commented that the French group would have appreciated more time to discuss the questions.

**Mr Najib El Khadi, Morocco**, commented that in Geneva some communications, and videos had been of a political nature. He remarked that the Association need to be intransigent about impartiality. He acknowledged that sometimes the Association has debates of a philosophical nature but emphasised that it must not, under any circumstances, become a forum for political debate. He concluded this is a question of principle.

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President**, commented that many sick things are happening in the world but that the Association is not the forum in which to discuss these topics. He said these issues should be debated in the IPU because it is a political forum.



## 11. Concluding Remarks

**Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President,** thanked colleagues for an excellent discussion and said he looked forward to working with them again in Istanbul. He thanked Mr Amadou Thimbo for his 3 years of service on the Executive Committee. He concluded by thanking the interpreters for making everything possible.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:30**