UNION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Constitutional & Parliamentary Information

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

Presentation on the parliamentary system in Türkiye
(Mr Hüseyin Kürşat Kirbiyik, Türkiye)

Going digital: a strategic turning point of the National Assembly of Vietnam
(Ms Le Thu Ha, Vietnam)

In the News and Innovations at Parliament
(Ms Kübra Teymur, Türkiye)

How do we strengthen the protection of parliament as a democratic institution?
(General Debate)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Mrs Fiona Kalemba, Malawi)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Dr Ahmed Abd Elghani, Egypt)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Mr Abdualla Mussa, Libya)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Mr Antonio Mahumane, Mozambique)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Thailand)

How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?
(Mr Pedro Agostinho De Neri, Angola)

Does your Parliament allow its staff to undertake remote working?
(General Debate)

Oversight over the Presidency in the South African Parliament
(Mr Xolile George, South Africa)

Public participation and parliamentary oversight
(Mr John Njoroge Mutega, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA))

Presentation of concrete examples of the use of Artificial Intelligence within Parliaments
(Ms Sarah Davies, United Kingdom)

Presentation of concrete examples of the use of Artificial Intelligence within Parliaments
(Mr Kalipha MM Mbye, The Gambia)

Presentation of concrete examples of the use of Artificial Intelligence within Parliaments
(Mrs Kareema Alabbasi and Mr Mohammed Alsisi Alboainain, Bahrain)

Presentation of concrete examples of the use of Artificial Intelligence within Parliaments
(Dr Silke Albin, Germany)

Presentation of concrete examples of the use of Artificial Intelligence within Parliaments
(Dr Omar Abdulrahman Alnuaimi, United Arab Emirates)

In the News and Innovation at Parliament
(Dr Gabriel Malebang, Botswana)

The role of the parliamentary administration in measuring the legislative impact of laws
(General Debate)

MINUTES OF THE SPRING SESSION

Istanbul (Türkiye)

17 to 19 April 2026

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 Spring Session 2026

Istanbul 17 to 19 April 2026

List of attendance

MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTES PRESENT

COUNTRY	CHAMBER or PARLIAMENT	NAME and TITLE
Algeria	Council of the Nation	Mr Ahcène DJOUAHRA **for** 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)
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	House of Representatives	Mr John STEVENS (DSG)
Bhutan	National Assembly	Mr Rinchen DORJI (SG)
Botswana	National Assembly	Dr Gabriel Gosiame G. MALEBANG (SG)
Brunei Darussalam	Legislative Council	Mrs Huraini HURAIRAH (SG)
Bulgaria	National Assembly	Mrs Stefana KARASLAVOVA (SG)
Burkina Faso	People's Legislative Assembly	Mr Armand PALM (DSG) **for** Mrs Valérie SIMPORÉ SOUBEIGA (SG)
Burundi	Senate	Mr Yared NYANDWI (DSG)
Canada	House of Commons	Mr Jean-Philippe BROCHU **for** Mr Eric JANSE (SG)
Chile	Chamber of Deputies	Mr Miguel LANDEROS PERKIC (SG)
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	Senate	Mr Jean MUKUALA BATEKE (SG)
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	National Assembly	Mr Jean NGUVULU KHOJI (SG)

Côte d'Ivoire	National Assembly	Mr Alain Acakpo ADDRA (SG)
Côte d'Ivoire	Senate	Mr Ousmane Samassi TOURÉ (SG)
Djibouti	National Assembly	Mr Ismael Goulal BOUDINE (SG)
Ecuador	National Assembly	Mr Giovanny Francisco BRAVO RODRÍGUEZ (SG)
Egypt	House of Representatives	Mr Ahmed MANNA (SG)
Egypt	Senate	Mr Ahmed Abd ELGHANI (SG)
Estonia	Parliament	Mr Antero HABICHT (SG)
Fiji	Parliament	Mrs Jeanette EMBERSON (SG)
Finland	Parliament	Mr Mikael KOILLINEN (SG)
France	Senate	Mr Eric TAVERNIER (SG, Presidency)
France	National Assembly	Mr Damien CHAMUSSY (SG, Presidency)
Gambia (The)	National Assembly	Mr Kalipha MM MBYE (SG)
Germany	Bundesrat	Dr Georg KLEEMANN (DSG)
Germany	Bundestag	Dr Silke ALBIN (DSG)
Ghana	Parliament	Mr Ebenezer A. DJIETROR (SG)
Iceland	Parliament	Mr Sverrir JÓNSSON (SG)
Ireland	House of Representatives	Ms Elaine GUNN (DSG)
Italy	Chamber of Deputies	Mrs Maria Teresa CALABRO **for** Dr Fabrizio CASTALDI (SG)
Japan	House of Councillors	Mr Tomoya KONDO **for** Mr Fumiyaso ITO (SG)
Kenya	Senate	Mr Jeremiah M. NYEGENYE (SG)
Kenya	Senate	Ms Eunice GICHANGI (DSG) **for** Mr Mohamed Ali MOHAMED (DSG)
Kenya	National Assembly	Ms Rana TIAMPATI **for** Mr Samuel NJOROGE (SG)
Latvia	Parliament	Ms Lelde RAFELDE (SG)
Lesotho	National Assembly	Mr Lebohang Fine MAEMA (SG)
Libya	House of Representatives	Mr Abdualla ALMASRI (SG)
Liechtenstein	Diet	Mr Stefan HASSLER (SG)

Luxembourg	Chamber of Deputies	Mr Laurent SCHEECK (SG)
Malawi	National Assembly	Mrs Fiona KALEMBA (SG)
Maldives	People's Majlis	Ms Fathimath NIUSHA (SG)
Mongolia	State Great Khural	Luvsandorj ULZIISAIKHAN (SG)
Morocco	House of Representatives	Mr Najib EL KHADI (SG)
Mozambique	Assembly of the Republic	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)
Nigeria	Senate	Mr Emmanuel ODO (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)
Portugal	Assembly of the Republic	Ms Anabela CABRAL FERREIRA (SG)
Romania/	Senate	Mr Mario Ovidiu OPREA (SG)
Romania	Chamber of Deputies	Mr Istvan GASPAR **for** Ms Ioana BRAN-VOINEA (SG)
Saudi Arabia	Shura Council	Mr Mohamed ALMUTAIRI (SG)
Senegal	National Assembly	Mr Amadou THIMBO (SG)
Serbia	National Assembly	Mr Dario KUKOLJ **for** Mr Srdjan SMILJANIC (SG)
Singapore	Parliament	Ms MOK Chi Yu **for** Mr SIOW Peng Han (SG)
Slovakia	National Council	Mr Marek LISANSKY **for** Mr Daniel GUSPAN (SG)
Somalia	Senate	Mr Abdullahi Haji GEDI MUMIN **for** Mr Abdelnasir GULED (SG)

Somalia	House of the People	Mr Abdo Fouad ADEN **for** Mr Abdirahman Mohamed ABDULLE (SG)
South Africa	Parliament	Mr Xolile GEORGE (SG)
South Africa	National Assembly	Mr Masibulele XASO (SG)
Suriname	National Assembly	Mr Dino OEDIT **for** Mrs Ruth Lucia DE WINDT (SG)
Sweden	Parliament	Mr Ingvar MATTSON (SG)
Switzerland	National Assembly	Mr Philippe SCHWAB (SG)
Tanzania	National Assembly	Mr Daniel ELIUFOO **for** Mr Baraka Ildephonce LEONARD (SG)
Thailand	Senate	Mr Sopon CHATABUTJARU **for** Mrs Pannita SATARNTRAIPOPE (SG)
Thailand	Senate	Mrs Nawanan NETITHANAKUL (DSG)
Thailand	House of Representatives	Ms Steejit TAIPIBOONSUK (DSG)
Timor Leste	National Parliament	Mr Edgar Sequeira MARTINS (SG)
Türkiye	Grand National Assembly	Mr Hüseyin Kürşat KIRBIYIK (SG)
Türkiye	Grand National Assembly	Mrs Kübra TEYMUR (DSG)
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)
Vietnam	National Assembly	Mrs LE Thu Ha (DSG)
Zambia	Parliament	Mrs Loveness MAYAKA (SG)

Zimbabwe	National Assembly	Mr Kennedy Mugove CHOKUDA (SG)
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 John MUTEGA (DSG)
Maghreb Consultative Council	Mr Said MOKADEM (SG)
Parliamentary Assembly of francophone countries	Mr Jean-Baptiste LECLÈRE (SG)

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FIRST SITTING

Friday 17 April 2026 (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:

Mr Rinchen DORJI	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Bhutan
Ms Geraldine GAUTIERS	Director General of the Senate, Belgium
Mrs Huraini HURAIRAH	Clerk to the Legislative Council, Brunei Darussalam
Mr Yared NYANDWI	Deputy Secretary General of the Senate, Burundi
Mr Jaime Luis LACOUTURE PEÑALOZA	Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Colombia
Mr Ousmane Samassi TOURÉ	Secretary General of the Senate, Côte d'Ivoire
Mr Andreas CHRISTODOULOU	Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Cyprus
Mr Ahmed Abd ELGHANI	Secretary General of the Senate, Egypt
Mr Kereyou BANATA	Secretary General of the House of Peoples' Representatives, Ethiopia
Mr Fumiyasu ITO	Secretary General of the House of Councillors, Japan

Mr Keiji YAKUWA	Deputy Secretary General of the House of Councillors, Japan
Mr Stefan HASSLER	Secretary General of the Diet, Liechtenstein
Mrs Ambinintsoa July Diana FANDRO	Secretary General the National Assembly, Madagascar
Ms Luvsandorj ULZIISAIKHAN	Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Mongolia
Mr Saeed Ahmad MAITLA	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Pakistan
Mr Mark Llandro MENDOZA	Secretary General of the Senate, Philippines
Mr Marek SIWIEC	Secretary General of the Sejm, Poland
Mrs Tania ISAAC	Clerk of the National Assembly, Seychelles
Mr SIOW Peng Han	Secretary General of the Parliament, Singapore
Mrs Nawanan NETITHANAKUL	Deputy Secretary General of the Senate, Thailand
Mrs Loveness MAYAKA	Acting Clerk of the National Assembly, Zambia

The list of new members was approved by the Association.

3. Executive Committee elections

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, recalled that in Geneva, the Association agreed to open 1 post of Vice-President and 1 post as ordinary member to election at this session to proactively replace Mr Remco Nehmelman and Dr Omar Alnuaimi for whom this will be the sixth and last session on the Executive Committee.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President resumed the election timetable, as set out on the agenda. He 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 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.

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, and on a trial basis in Arabic and Spanish, funded by the IPU. Other languages provided had been sponsored by national parliaments.

6. Welcome and brief presentation on the parliamentary system in Türkiye, Mr Hüseyin Kürşat Kirbiyik, Secretary General of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye

An Overview of Government System of Türkiye:

☐ Following the constitutional referendum held in 2017, Türkiye transitioned from a parliamentary system to a presidential system in 2018.

☐ Members of the Parliament and the President of Republic, who is the head of executive organ, are elected by people in elections held every five years on the same day and assume their duties.

☐ With the transition to the presidential system, a strict separation of powers has been adopted

An Overview of Government System of Türkiye

♣ The right of executive organ to introduce bills has been abolished, and the right to propose bill has been granted exclusively to members of parliament.

♣ The only exception to the rule that the executive organ cannot submit bills is for budget and final account bills. These bills are presented to Parliament by the President.

♣ Members of the legislative body are not allowed to serve in the executive branch during their term of office as members of parliament. Should a member of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) be appointed by the President as Vice President or Minister, their parliamentary mandate shall be terminated.

The Number of Members of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and the Legislative Term

♣ The GNAT consists of 600 members of parliament elected by universal suffrage for a term of 5 years.

♣ Any Turkish citizen reached the age of 18 is eligible for election as a member of parliament. A member of parliament whose term has expired may be re-elected to serve another term.

♣ The period between two elections is referred to as the legislative term. The current term is the 28th Legislative Term.

♣ The concept of the legislative term is a key term frequently used in parliamentary language. For example, knowledge of the legislative term in which a law was enacted facilitates access to relevant information, such as the minutes of debates on the law or the committee report

The Powers and Duties of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye

The duties and powers of the GNAT are set out in general terms in Article 87 of the Constitution as follows:

1. enacting, amending, and repealing laws;
2. debating and adopting the budget bills and final accounts bills;
3. deciding to issue currency and declare war;
4. approving the ratification of international treaties;
5. deciding to proclaim amnesty and pardon with the majority of three-fifths of the GNAT; and
6. exercising the powers and carry out the duties envisaged in the other articles of the Constitution.

The Fundamental Legislative Bodies of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye

♣ Plenary: The highest decision-making body of the GNAT, where matters relating to legislative and oversight activities are discussed, debated and ultimately decided.

♣ Bureau: It comprises the Speaker of the Assembly, Vice-Speakers, Quaestors and Secretaries. It performs various duties in legislative activities and the organization of administrative affairs.

♣ Political party group: A group formed by a political party with at least 20 members of parliament in the GNAT. It possesses certain rights arising from the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure in legislative and oversight activities.

♣ Committee: These are bodies comprising a specific number of Members of Parliament selected on the basis of their expertise, which examine the bills prior to the Plenary stage.

♣ Board of Spokespersons: This is a body comprising the chairs or vice-chairs of the political party groups, chaired by the Speaker of Parliament or a Vice-Speaker. It plays a significant role in the organization of the Assembly's work

Right to Introduce Bill

♣ The fundamental role of parliaments is to exercise the legislative function. The legislative function is essentially embodied in the legislative will.

♣ A bill may be introduced with the signature of one or more Members of Parliament.

♣ Bills are submitted together with their explanatory notes.

♣ The explanatory note contains information regarding the bill as a whole and its articles; specifies which provisions are to be amended, added or deleted; and sets out the reasons for the regulation, as well as the intended purpose and objectives.

♣ Bills concerning the budget and final accounts, however, are submitted to the GNAT by the President

The Preparation and Examination of Bill

♣ Bills Introduced by Members of Parliament are examined by the Department of Resolutions; Laws and where necessary, amendments are made to ensure compliance with legislative drafting standards.

♣ The Drafting Support Office, which is attached to the Department of Laws and Resolutions, also prepares a bill at the request of a Member of Parliament. However, in all cases, the Member of Parliament concerned remains the signatory to the bill. 9/22 Referral of the Bill to the Committee

♣ The committees to which the bill are to be referred—whether as the primary or secondary committee—are determined by the Department of Laws and Resolutions and submitted to the Speaker of the GNAT for approval.

♣ Upon the Speaker's approval, bills are referred to the designated committees for consideration.

Legislative Process: Committee Meetings

♣ Following the referral of a bill to the relevant standing committee, chair of the committee sets the agenda and convenes the committee to discuss the bill. The committee may also convene at the request of one-third of its members. #

♣ It convenes with one-third of its members present. Decisions are taken by a simple majority of those present.

♣ Members of Parliament who are not members of the committee may also attend the meeting. However, they may not table motions or take part in votes.

♣ The meeting may be attended by Vice-Presidents of the Republic, ministers, deputy ministers and senior public officials representing the executive organ.

♣ In addition to representatives of the relevant ministries, public institutions and organizations, representatives of civil society organizations and academics may also be invited to the meeting.

♣ Parliamentary correspondents may attend the meeting.

Legislative Process: Committee Meeting

♣ Bills relating to one another may be considered jointly.

♣ A sub-committee may be established to facilitate the committee's work and refine the text.

♣ The text approved by the committee is drafted.

♣ A report is prepared detailing the committee's deliberations and the amendments, additions and deletions made to the bill.

♣ Committee members with diverse views or objections may submit a dissenting opinion. The dissenting opinion is appended to the report.

♣ The committee report and text relating to the bill adopted by the committee are printed (under a serial number), distributed and included on the agenda of the Plenary.

Legislative Process: Plenary

♣ The Plenary is the parliament's final decision-making body.

♣ The committee report and the text of the bills are finally debated and decided upon in the Plenary.

♣ Following its adoption by the Plenary, the bill becomes law and is sent to the Office of President of the Republic for publication.

Legislative Process: The Office of the President

♣ The President shall review the law adopted by the Plenary of the GNAT within 15 days.

♣ The President may publish the law in the Official Gazette or send it back to the GNAT for further consideration.

♣ In the event of a return, the GNAT may adopt the law as it stands by an absolute majority of the total number of members.

♣ The law comes into force upon its publication in the Official Gazette by the President

Oversight Mechanisms of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye

In modern democracies, the balance and oversight between the legislative and executive organs are ensured by the oversight mechanisms of parliaments. Oversight Mechanisms of the GNAT:
1. Written question
2. General debate
3. Parliamentary inquiry
4. Parliamentary investigation

Written Question

♣This refers to a Member of Parliament requesting information from the Vice-President or a minister by means of a written motion.
♣ Written questions must be signed by a Member of Parliament and submitted to the Speaker of the GNAT.
♣ They must be answered within 15 days at the latest.
♣ As of 24 March 2026, 42,969 written questions have been submitted to the Speaker of the GNAT during the 28th Legislative Term.
Written questions are examined in accordance with the formal and substantive requirements set out in the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure.
♣ Written questions are then submitted, with the signature of the Speaker of the GNAT, to the Office of the Vice-President or the relevant Ministry

General Debate

♣ It refers to the deliberation of a specific matter of concern to society and functions of state in the Plenary of the GNAT.
♣ When a specific matter is brought before the Plenary through a broad debate involving all parliamentary groups, it draws attention to and raises awareness of that matter

Parliamentary Inquiry

♣ It is an inquiry conducted through a special committee established to gather information on a specific matter.
♣ State secrets and trade secrets are excluded from the scope.

♣ The term of office is 3 months; if the inquiry cannot be completed within 3 months, one month extension is granted.

♣ The committee has the authority to request information and documents from public institutions and organizations (including local authorities, universities and public enterprises), professional bodies and associations working in the public interest; to summon and hear relevant parties; to appoint experts; to conduct work outside Ankara; and to carry out on site inspections. organizations. It may consult non-governmental

♣ The Committee prepares a report based on the results of its investigations and inquiries. A debate on the prepared report is held in the Plenary.

Parliamentary Investigation

♣ A parliamentary investigation can be described as a way of parliamentary scrutiny conducted by the Assembly in accordance with Article 106 of the Constitution concerning the Vice-Presidents and Ministers.

♣ A parliamentary investigation may be requested regarding the Vice-Presidents and Ministers, who are incumbent or who have terminated their terms of office on the grounds that criminal acts requiring criminal liability were committed during their tenure in connection with their duties, by means of a motion submitted by an absolute majority of the total number of members of the GNAT (at least 301 signatures).

Motion of Parliamentary Investigation

♣ A motion to initiate a parliamentary investigation into the relevant Vice-President or Minister shall be adopted if it receives the support of at least three fifths (360) of the total number of Members in the Plenary.

♣ Following the adoption of the motion, a Parliamentary Investigation Committee comprising 15 Members of Parliament shall be established.

♣ A debate on the report of Investigation Committee shall be held in the Plenary.

♣ In the final debate in the Plenary, the relevant Vice President or Minister shall be referred to the Supreme Court* by a secret ballot of two-thirds (400) of the total number of members.

Mr Farid HAJIYEV, Azerbaijan, thanked our Turkish hosts for an excellent cultural programme and interesting presentation. He said that there was much to learn from the Turkish example.

Mr Ahmed Manna, Egypt, remarked that the Egyptian system is very similar to that of Turkey, he noted that MPs in Turkey could be elected from 18 years old. He said that in Egypt, the age of maturity is 21 and asked the Secretary General to comment on how it was decided that 18 would be the age of maturity for election purposes in Turkey.

Ms Sarah Davies, UK, asked about written questions. She noted that in March 2026 there had been nearly 43,000 written questions, she asked if this was a dramatic increase and, if so, what resources were required to process the written questions. She commented that, in the House of Commons, the number of written questions tabled has doubled in this parliament, which has led to resource discussions on how to manage this new demand.

Mr Xolile George, South Africa, asked about three areas of the presentation. Firstly, the time it takes in Turkey from initiation to adoption of a Bill. Secondly, the involvement of the public in the legislative process. Thirdly, about referral of the bill back to the Assembly by the President. He specifically enquired how the two thirds majority interacted with constitutional matters. Finally, he noted that members of the Executive in Turkey are not members of the Legislature. He asked whether this is why some reports are sent to the Supreme Court, rather than the President.

Mr Ingvar Mattson, Sweden also noted the astonishing number of written questions processed by the Turkish parliament, he enquired whether the Members were using AI to write questions and whether this has led to an increase?

Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada, also enquired whether there was an obligation on the Government to reply to all written questions, whether there are any deadlines for the submission of responses and any rules regarding the format of responses from the Government.

Mr Hüseyin Kürşat Kirbiyik, Türkiye, replied to Egypt that, various age categories were assigned different responsibilities under the law in Turkey. However, all parties have agreed that for voting and standing as a political candidate it should be 18. He noted that an MP aged 18 has not yet been elected. However, they have had MPs elected who are 20 or 22 years old. He then remarked that this reflects the value placed on youth in his country.

On written questions, he said the number of 43,000 does reflect an increase on last term but not a dramatic increase. He said it has been increasing each year gradually. He noted that AI may have an influence and that all the written

questions submitted do not have value. Also, many of the written questions are the same question. He said the Minister, and only the Minister and not Junior Ministers, must reply to written questions and sign the response. He said there is a specific format for the response and that it is an e-document. If it is not possible to respond by the deadline, the Minister must warn the person who asked the question.

In response to South Africa, he said there is no median length of time for the passage of a Bill. Some bills are processed more rapidly than others. He noted that, after a proposition is made, there are deadlines for each phase of the legislative process. However, he said this is not too rapid. Regarding the President's referral of the bill, he said it is correct this might be due to constitutional reasons. He said a bill requires the agreement of 301 MPs out of 600, not two thirds, and if they re-vote it is sent to the President. Regarding the Supreme Court, he said there is a trial process with all members of the court who determine issues on the basis of impartiality.

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

7. Communication: Mrs Le Thu Ha, National Assembly of Vietnam, on 'Going digital: a strategic turning point of the National Assembly of Viet Nam'

Mr. President,
Dear Colleagues, Secretaries-General of Parliaments,
Distinguished Delegates,

In a world where data is connecting markets, supply chains, and technological ecosystems across the globe, an increasingly pressing question arises for the parliamentary community: why does legislative knowledge remain largely confined within national boundaries?

Today, parliaments operate in a policy environment that is rapidly changing and increasingly complex. The pace of change in technology, the economy, and society is placing new demands not only on elected representatives, but also on parliamentary administrations - the institutions directly responsible for ensuring the quality of information, institutional knowledge, and legislative processes.

For parliamentary advisory and support bodies, the challenge is no longer simply one of managing ever-growing workloads. The greater challenge is how to preserve legislative quality, transparency, and institutional adaptability in a context where

digital transformation and artificial intelligence are profoundly reshaping the way policies are formulated and implemented.

Experience from many parliaments shows that digital transformation is not merely about introducing new technologies. It is about transforming the way legislative knowledge is organised, information flows are managed, and Members are supported in making data-informed decisions. This becomes even more important as policy issues are increasingly cross-sectoral and transnational, requiring stronger capacity for comparative reference and international learning.

At the National Assembly of Viet Nam, we have undertaken reforms in this direction, focusing on the digitalisation of legislative procedures, the development of integrated parliamentary data platforms, and the gradual application of policy analysis tools — including tools that support the review of legal consistency and legislative impact assessment. These efforts have contributed to improving coordination within parliamentary work, enhancing Members' access to information, and promoting a gradual shift from experience-based law-making to evidence and data-based law-making.
From this experience, we have come to recognise that strengthening data capacity and the governance of legislative knowledge within each parliament is a prerequisite for institutional innovation. However, in a world where policy challenges are increasingly global in nature, the full value of parliamentary digital transformation will only be realised when efforts at the national level are connected through international cooperation.

In other words, legislative digital transformation should be approached at two levels: strengthening data capacity and knowledge governance within each parliament, while progressively establishing mechanisms through which parliaments can share and reference legislative knowledge across borders. Such a combination would not only enhance the quality of comparative policy research, but also provide a reliable and verifiable information environment for the use of advanced analytical tools.
At the same time, practice also reveals a structural gap. While policy challenges are increasingly global, legislative knowledge and data remain fragmented and lack effective mechanisms for connectivity among parliaments. This gap not only constrains comparative policy research, but also reduces the effectiveness of modern analytical tools. In the age of artificial intelligence, access to authoritative, reliable, and verifiable legal data is becoming a foundational condition for improving the quality of parliamentary advisory work.

Legislative sovereignty does not mean the isolation of legislative knowledge. On the contrary, legislative capacity increasingly depends on the ability to connect knowledge, learn from international experience, and make responsible use of data. Based on this understanding, we believe that the ASGP community may wish to advance a new cooperative approach aimed at strengthening connectivity and the use of legislative data among parliaments.

Such an initiative would not seek to standardise the substance of national laws. Rather, it would create conditions for comparative research, strengthen parliamentary advisory capacity, support the development of policy analysis tools,

and gradually contribute to the emergence of a globally connected legislative knowledge community.

Nor would such an initiative necessarily need to begin with large-scale centralised databases. A more feasible approach would be to progressively develop a network of connected legislative knowledge, through which parliaments could access and reference one another's information systems on the basis of appropriate data-sharing standards, professional consensus, and full respect for the diversity of legal systems. This approach would make it possible to build on existing data platforms, reduce major investment requirements, and, more importantly, strengthen the role of parliamentary advisory bodies as stewards of legislative knowledge in the digital age. We believe that ASGP, as a forum of parliamentary Secretaries-General, is particularly well placed to coordinate and advance this process - not as a provider of technical infrastructure, but as a conductor connecting legislative knowledge globally.

In the digital age, legislative capacity can no longer be measured solely by the number of laws adopted, but also by the ability of parliaments to access knowledge, use data, anticipate policy risks, and adapt flexibly to change. Cooperation on legislative data is therefore not merely a technical option; it is a strategic requirement for reinforcing the role of parliaments in modern democratic governance.

If pursued through an appropriate and gradual roadmap, this initiative could become a meaningful and lasting contribution of ASGP to the future of parliamentary institutions. The future of law-making in the digital age will not be determined by the isolated efforts of individual parliaments, but by our shared ability to exchange knowledge, connect data, and innovate the way legislative institutions operate. Viet Nam stands ready to share its experience and to participate actively in this cooperative process.

Thank you for your attention.

8. Communication: Ms Kübra TEYMUR, Grand National Assembly of Türkiye

Ms Kübra TEYMUR, presented using a PowerPoint which can be viewed on the website here: TBMM BAŞKANLIĞI İDARİ TEŞKİLATI

Mr Ingvar Mattson, Sweden asked what are the next steps being considered, and what challenges have been encountered and solutions implemented?

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK said that in the UK, they are planning a renovation of parliamentary buildings and there is considerable debate regarding the budget allocated to environmental measures in this context. Parliament should be as environmentally friendly as possible, but the investment required is substantial. She enquired about budget required to make the Parliament greener?

Mr Ebenezer DJIETROR, Ghana commented that the UK had asked the very question he wanted to raise. How did you go about it? Did you rely on government funding, or did you turn to private sector partners?

Mr Edgar Sequeira MARTINS, Timor-Leste commented that the awareness-raising activities are very interesting. He asked is this sufficient to raise awareness among communities, or has the government also taken action to complement the Parliament's campaigns?

Ms. Kübra Teymur responded that they had faced challenges. Everyone contributed on a voluntary basis and the ministries and public institutions supported it. She concluded that the institutional budget supplemented the funding.

9. Concluding remarks

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, thanked all the speakers. He announced that, as the deadline of 12.30 had passed, and there was only 1 candidate for the post of Vice-President, that Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk of Thailand was elected.

He closed the sitting and reminded colleagues that the next sitting of the Association would start at 2.30pm this afternoon.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.35PM.

SECOND SITTING

Friday 17 April 2026 (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. Announcement regarding the post of Vice-President

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, invited Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk to say a few words following her appointment at Vice-President of the Association.

GENERAL DEBATE WITH INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUPS: How do we strengthen the protection of parliament as a democratic institution?

Dr Georg Kleeman, Germany, spoke as follows:

Dear Mr. President,
Dear Colleagues,
Parliaments are at the heart of our democracy. This is where we argue, negotiate and make decisions. Laws are debated, governments are held to account, and political will is formed. When parliaments are weakened, the democratic system as a whole comes under pressure.

Unfortunately, that is precisely what we are currently witnessing in many countries.

Disinformation, polarization and open attacks on the principle of the separation of powers are undermining confidence in democratic processes. Whether through cyberattacks, the executive overstepping its authority, or even violent attempted coups – parliaments around the world are increasingly facing attacks, both from the inside and the outside. Even countries that have so far been regarded as stable democracies are no exception.

The effects are clear: over the past two decades, democracy has been in decline

worldwide. For the first time in twenty years, there are fewer democracies than autocracies in the world; almost three-quarters of the world's population now lives in an autocracy. And even countries that remain democratic are showing a worrying trend towards democratic disenchantment: global election turnout has fallen by almost 10% over the last 15 years. That is a serious problem.

As Secretaries-Generals, we are protecting our institutions – and equipping them for the future. This is part of our core responsibility. The ASGP gives us a forum for sharing experience and exchanging perspectives and ideas.
So: How can we strengthen our parliaments and consolidate their role within democracy? That is our question for today.

Let me briefly outline the four key themes I would like us to explore together.

First: Building public trust.
Parliaments depend on the support of the public. Transparent decision-making, clear communication and opportunities for citizen participation can help to reduce disengagement with politics. One point is worth reflecting on: when we fail to explain parliamentary processes clearly and accessibly, we leave space for those who offer simplistic solutions – and polarise public debate.

Second: Robust democratic rules – inside and outside parliament.
Respectful debate, recognition of legitimate opposition, and a willingness to compromise must be actively cultivated. This is becoming harder in times of growing. In many cases, those involved no longer play by the rules of democracy. Against this background, parliaments need rules of procedure that provide strong protection against anti-constitutional attacks. But protective measures must not stifle an open culture of debate – they must enable it. That balance is genuinely hard to find.

It raises some difficult questions: how should one deal with democratically elected anti-democrats? How can parliaments be protected from extremist attacks from within without unduly restricting the free mandate of members of parliament?

Third: Parliament's role vis-à-vis the executive.
Parliament is the central institution of democracy and, in many countries, the only body with direct democratic legitimacy. Fundamental decisions must therefore always be taken by parliament. The law is a key instrument here, but keeping the government in check is no less important.

If important decisions are delegated to the executive by elected representatives, the result is a concentration of power that undermines the separation of powers.

This is not a theoretical concern. Historical and contemporary experience shows that democracies are frequently not toppled from the outside by coup, but are eroded from within.

When governments take over core functions of parliament, democracy is at risk. And fabricated emergencies must not be used as a pretext to bypass the parliamentary legislative process through executive decree. As committed democrats, we must take a firm stand against this.

Fourth: Institutional security.
Cyberattacks have become a daily reality for parliaments. They pose a serious threat to the information security and integrity of our institutions. At the same time, violent attacks carried out by lone actors and organised groups are increasingly frequent.

Individual members are being intimidated online and offline through hate messages and death threats. All of this weakens parliamentary work.
Members of parliament, parliamentary bodies and parliamentary administrations require better protection – both online and offline. In Germany, for example, a Bundestag Police Act is currently being debated, which would enable the Bundestag police to share data with other security agencies. I am sure many of you have your own national experiences to share on this point. But here, too, there is a fundamental tension: parliament must also remain transparent.

If security measures lead to isolation, they may erode trust. How can we equip our parliaments to manage growing security risks while keeping them open and accessible? There are no easy answers – but developing a comprehensive security and communications strategy will be essential for any modern parliament.

We clearly have a great deal to discuss. At the heart of it all lies one central question: how do we resolve the tension between protecting parliament and keeping it open?

To guide our discussion, let me put a few questions to you:
– In your view, what are the most serious threats currently facing parliaments?
– What role do disinformation and social media play in shaping public trust in parliaments?
– What can parliaments do to actively rebuild public trust?
– How much security does an open parliament need – and how much can it sustain?
– What reforms are needed to ensure that parliaments remain effective in the future?

- Who holds responsibility for safeguarding Parliament as a democratic institution (for example: Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff, journalists, the public, law enforcement authorities, etc.)?
- How do we protect democratic norms and procedural rules of parliament, particularly in times of crisis or significant political turnover?
- How do we protect parliamentary buildings, in terms of security and historical preservation of buildings?
- How do we defend parliament against the executive and judiciary?

****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.* ***Sverir Johnsson (Iceland)*** *and* ***Ms Sarah Davies (UK)*** *represented the English-speaking groups.* ***Mr Said Mokadem (CCM)*** *represented the Arab-speaking group,* ***Mr Eric Tavernier (France)*** *represented the French speaking group and* ***Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri (Angola)*** *represented the Portuguese/Spanish speaking group.**

3. 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 5.30PM

THIRD SITTING

Saturday 18 April 2026 (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 and that members who have not paid cannot vote.

2. New Member

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, told the Association that the secretariat had received a new request for membership, which had been put before the Executive Committee, and agreed to:

Mr Alain Acakpo ADDRA, Secretary of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire

The new member was approved by the Association.

THEME: HOW ARE SECRETARIES GENERAL APPOINTED AND HOW DO WE DEFINE THE SCOPE OF THE ROLE?

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, reflected that this theme had attracted a very large number of communication applications and that consequently the time for questions after each communication would be reduced to five minutes.

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

My presentation today begins about 800 years ago.

The role of Clerk originated in the UK Parliament in the 13th century as a secretarial function, at a time when "clerk" simply meant someone who could read

and write. The first formal appointment of a Clerk of the House of Commons dates to 1363.

By the 16th century, Clerks were recording proceedings that became the official Journals of the House, and by the mid-17th century their role had expanded to advising the Speaker and the House on procedure.

A defining moment occurred in 1642 when King Charles I entered the Commons to arrest five Members, an act later recognized as a breach of parliamentary privilege and establishing that the monarch may not enter the House. The event was recorded by Clerk Assistant John Rushworth under the supervision of Clerk Henry Elsing, demonstrating the Clerk's enduring role as custodian of the parliamentary record and guardian of institutional memory.

Role of the Clerk

The Clerk's historic function as record keeper of Parliament, responsible for documenting proceedings and maintaining custody of the House's records, serves as the foundation of the office as it exists today.

In Canada, the Clerk and other table officers still produce the scroll — the real-time, unrevised record of proceedings — and it continues to be written by hand during each sitting. The information recorded in the scroll is later reflected in the Journals, which are produced in digital format and serve as the official, revised record of the House. While the form has evolved, the underlying function has remained consistent.

Although recording proceedings remains a core responsibility, the role of the Clerk now encompasses far more than record-keeping alone.

Modernization

Other than a brief reference to administering the oath of allegiance, there is little mention of the Clerk in the Parliament of Canada Act. The Standing Orders, however, set out a range of procedural and administrative responsibilities.

While the core functions of the Clerk have changed little since the creation of the country in 1867, the scope of the role has expanded considerably as the House and its administration have grown more complex. The Clerk is the chief procedural adviser to the Speaker and Members of the House of Commons and oversees the general administration of the House. They are at the service of all Members, regardless of party affiliation, and must act with impartiality and discretion.

The Clerk has the status of deputy minister and serves as Secretary to the Board of Internal Economy, the governing body of the House responsible for its financial and administrative affairs.

Structure
The Clerk is responsible for a variety of other tasks, though managing the administration of the House of Commons has probably become the most prominent one.

With over 2000 employees working for the House Administration, the Clerk is supported by senior officials responsible for the various organizational units. They form an executive governing body called the Clerk's Management Group and assist the Clerk in his or her functions. Their main responsibilities include: setting strategic directions, priorities and expected results of the House of Commons administration; ensuring the necessary financial and human resources are available to carry out the Administration's mandate, reviewing and/ or approving all policies pertaining to the House of Commons Administration before they are submitted to the Board of Internal Economy for approval or information and, ensuring that the Administration complies with all policies or directives.

To assist in assuring the autonomy of the House of Commons, the legislative branch of our parliamentary system, from the Government, the executive branch, the employees who work at the House are employees of the House with the Board of Internal Economy as their employer. They are not employees of the public service who ultimately report to the Government. Oddly though, there are three exceptions: the Clerk, the Law Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms. These have always been, and continue to be nominated by the Government, or specifically are Governor in Council appointments. I will now overview the historic and current process for selected the Clerk.

History of the Nomination Process
The process for appointing the Clerk of the House of Commons developed gradually, beginning as an inconsistent and largely informal practice before evolving into the more structured and transparent process in place today. I must first say that the Clerk has traditionally held office at pleasure, meaning as long as it pleases the appointing entity.

Nominations Based on Reputation (1867-1902)
The first Clerk, William Burns Lindsay, carried over from the Province of Canada at Confederation in 1867, and was succeeded by his assistant, Alfred Patrick. John George Bourinot followed; a former parliamentary reporter, he brought deep procedural expertise and authored Canada's first major work on parliamentary procedure. His appointment, recommended by the Prime Minister, reflected an early reliance on reputation rather than formal selection processes.
Political Nominations (1902-1979)

In the decades that followed, several Clerks were politicians, either MPs or former candidates. Appointments were closely tied to partisan life and sometimes criticized publicly, particularly as discomfort grew with overt political patronage.

Career Nominations (1979-2001)
A turning point came in 1979 with the appointment of Charles Beverley Koester, the first career public servant to serve as Clerk, selected after consultation with the Official Opposition. Working with Speaker Jeanne Sauvé, Koester professionalized the office by developing internal training and firmly establishing political neutrality and institutional loyalty as core principles.
His successors, Robert Marleau and William Corbett, were also career House officers. During their time, a 'Career Management System for Procedural Clerks' was developed to further formalize the profession, and to ensure proper succession planning. Also during this period, Marleau co-authored with his Deputy Clerk, House of Commons Procedure and Practice, now our authoritative procedural text, the fourth edition having just been published a few months ago. At the time of Corbett's mandate, a Special Committee was created to modernize House procedures, including appointment processes.

Modern Nomination Process (2001-present)
In 2001, the House adopted reforms requiring consultation with opposition parties and committee review of nominees, introducing transparency and parliamentary oversight. Audrey O'Brien became the first Clerk appointed under this system and the first woman to hold the position, following review and approval by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and the House itself.
In February 2016, the Government of Canada announced a new policy for most Governor-in-Council appointments, emphasizing open, transparent, and merit-based processes, including publicly advertised competitions.

Based on this policy, the government at the time chose to depart from the established practice of promoting a senior internal official and instead launched a public competition for the next Clerk. Consultations with opposition parties were minimal and this process resulted in the appointment of Charles Robert, a Senate official, as Clerk of the House of Commons. These decisions were widely criticized by opposition parties, particularly in light of the expectations that had developed around cross-party consultation. During the ratification vote in the Chamber, the Official Opposition and the Green Party voted against the nomination.

In the subsequent selection process—which lead to the appointment of the current Clerk, Eric Janse, a slightly different process was utilized. The broader Governor-in-Council appointment process administered by the government through the Privy Council Office was again used, but it was agreed, after consultation with all the

recognized parties, to add an additional step. Specifically, after the Government-led competition, the selected candidate was asked to meet jointly with representatives (House Leaders and Whips) from all the recognized parties While this consultation is not set out in the Standing Orders, it reflects the importance of the Clerk's role as a non-partisan officer serving the institution as a whole. As a result, the usual review by the Standing Committee on Procedure via an appearance was waived, and the candidate was then recommended to the House by the committee. Finally, rather than holding a recorded division (vote), the House adopted the nomination unanimously.

Summary of Current Practice

Let me sum up how the appointment of the Clerk is codified today, building on the historical evolution I've just described.

Under the Standing Orders of the House (Standing Order 111.1), a proposed appointment of the Clerk is first referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, initiating parliamentary scrutiny. While the Standing Orders do not require a full curriculum vitae, biographical information is usually provided to give members context. The committee has broad discretion in reviewing the nomination, typically hearing from the nominee and sometimes other witnesses, and may or may not report its findings to the House.

Following committee consideration, the government moves a ratification motion in the House. If approved, the appointment is finalized by Order in Council.

There is no formal academic path to becoming Clerk; the role requires experience gained through long service in parliamentary positions. The current Clerk exemplifies this professional, internal career progression, reflecting the shift from political appointments to a non-partisan model grounded in institutional expertise. Specifically, he began his career at the House in 1992, working in procedural roles, and was appointed a Table Officer in 1998. Over time, he held increasingly senior positions, including Deputy Clerk, Procedure, and served as Acting Clerk in 2023.

Conclusion

To conclude, the recent emphasis on consultation across the House points to what the clerkship requires in practice. The role calls for a specific combination of skills — a deep understanding of procedure, strong institutional knowledge, and the ability to operate in a political environment without being partisan. The evolution of the appointment process reflects these requirements. Taken together, these elements are designed to safeguard the Clerk's independence and, in doing so, to uphold the authority and institutional integrity of the House of Commons.

Our Standing Orders require that at the beginning of each Parliament, the House must hold a debate on its rules and practices. The most recent debate was held on

February 6, 2026, and one Member suggested the Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms should no longer be Governor-in-Council appointments. He likely did not realize that the Law Clerk is also a government appointment. Time will tell if the Government, or Parliament, will one day pursue that recommendation.

Mr Pedro Agostinho De Neri (Angola) asked for details regarding the differences between the role of the Clerk of Parliament and that of a deputy minister in government ministries.

Mr Xolile George (South Africa) requested clarification on the respective roles of the executive and Parliament in the appointment of the Clerk in Canada. He also inquired whether there were mechanisms to limit the influence of political groups on the appointment procedure in order to ensure the legitimacy of the process.

Ms Chloe Mawson (United Kingdom) asked whether there was a performance evaluation system for the Clerk and what procedures were in place should the Clerk's performance be deemed unsatisfactory.

Mr Ahmet Bozkurt, **Türkiye** asked whether Canada had ever faced criticism regarding the Clerk's impartiality.

Mr Kennedy Mugove ChokudA, Zimbabwe, asked whether the Clerk's term of office in Canada was time-limited and whether there was a process for terminating their appointment.

Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada) explained that the position of Clerk is equivalent to that of a deputy minister, who is responsible for departmental administration. He noted that it is not a political post but a senior civil service role, comparable to that of a deputy minister within a government department.

Regarding the appointment process, and in response to a question raised by South Africa, he indicated that the process is led by the executive branch while also involving Parliament. The executive proposes a candidate, whose appointment is then submitted to the House of Commons for approval before being formally finalized by the executive.

On the subject of independence and professionalism, he highlighted that the job description is made public, ensuring transparency in the process and allowing any qualified individual to apply.

In response to inquiries about potential dismissal, he explained that a performance evaluation mechanism for the Clerk is in place. Performance is regularly reviewed, and remuneration is linked in part to these results, under the oversight of the Speaker. He added that there have been no instances of a term being cut short, as the situation is generally satisfactory and has not required the termination of the appointment.

3. Communication by Mrs Fiona Kalemba, Parliament of Malawi

INTRODUCTION

The office of the Clerk of Parliament plays an important role in a country's legislative framework, serving as both the administrative head and the procedural custodian of the National Assembly. The Clerk's role is critical and quite key in ensuring that parliamentary business is conducted with order, accuracy, and institutional continuity. Therefore, understanding how Clerks of Parliament are appointed, and how they define the scope of their responsibilities, provides valuable insight into the mechanisms that safeguard the independence, professionalism, and efficiency of parliaments.

APPOINTMENT PROCESS OF CLERK OF PARLIAMENT IN MALAWI

The office of Clerk of Parliament is established under section 55 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi. In accordance with this section, the Clerk is a public officer and has the general duty of assisting the Speaker of the National Assembly and performing such other functions as the Speaker may direct. The appointment process of the Clerk is regulated by section 194C(2) of the Constitution. Under this section, the Clerk is appointed (or removed) from office by the President of Malawi on recommendation of the Parliamentary Service Commission ("PSC"). PSC is created under section 194B of the Constitution as the body responsible for the overall management of the Parliamentary Service. The Parliamentary Service is made up of 2 public officers which render the required support services to the National Assembly. It is similarly created under the Constitution and the Clerk is part of the Parliamentary Service. The minimum qualification for the position of Clerk is a Master's Degree in law obtained subsequent to a university degree. The Clerk must also have relevant public service experience of not less than ten years at senior management level, as well as relevant knowledge in the operations of legislative bodies. The retirement age for officers in the Parliamentary Service is 60 years. In this regard a person who is 60 years or above is not eligible for appointment as Clerk.

SCOPE OF THE ROLE

The scope of the role of Clerk of Parliament in Malawi is defined by provisions of the Constitution, Parliamentary Service Act and other laws, the Standing Orders of the National Assembly and established practice. The role is both administrative and procedural as follows: a. Chief Executive Officer of the National Assembly: responsible for the administration and day to day management of the National Assembly and the Parliamentary Service; b. Procedural and Legal Advisor: Provides guidance to the Speaker and Members of Parliament on legal matters and parliamentary rules, practices, and procedures; 3 c. Record Keeper: Ensures accurate recording of proceedings, safekeeping of parliamentary papers, and maintenance of institutional memory; d. Facilitator of Committees: Supports parliamentary committees by coordinating their work and ensuring compliance with legislative processes; and e. Guardian of Integrity: Upholds the impartiality and professionalism of the parliamentary service, ensuring Parliament functions smoothly regardless of political dynamics.

CONCLUSION

The Clerk of Parliament in Malawi is a professional officer who ensures Parliament operates effectively. The appointment process is safeguarded by the law to protect the independence of the office. The scope of the role blends administrative leadership with procedural expertise, making the Clerk central to the functioning of Malawi's legislature.

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, commented that his colleague Fiona had made all colleagues feel seen with her presentation.

Mr Najib El Khadi, Morocco, said he would share his ideas on the role, rather than the process for appointment, which differs from one country to another. With respect to the role, he noted it is an eternally relevant topic which the Association returns to discuss periodically in order to share good practice between different generations of Secretary General. He noted the Association enables this transfer of knowledge between different generations.

He said the function of Secretary General is essentially administrative but academic and professional skills are also central. It is about administration in a highly political environment. He said a Secretary General is different to a Minister because they are called upon every day to bathe in highly political waters without getting their clothes wet. It is the ability to adapt, responding always to the unexpected, by which the Secretary General contributes to stability within the institution and avoids causing false problems. At the end of the day, Secretary Generals do not take decisions, they are called upon to work in the shadows rather

than the light. The political aspects are the most important of the role but to succeed in the field, we must adapt over time in responses to different challenges and the changing political climate.

Mr Kalipha MM MBYE, The Gambia, asked whether the President has a role in the appointment of the Clerk and whether this causes any problems? He said that in The Gambia, the President has no role in the process and this guarantees the independence of the clerk's role. Secondly, he noted the qualifications of the Clerk is restricted to a Master's Degree in Law. He remarked that, in his own context, this seems a restrictive requirement. Especially, when a Clerk must be an all-rounder (chief of data, procedural and even communications). He asked for the rationale behind this restriction?

Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri, Angola, congratulated her on the fact she would have employment until her retirement. He remarked that Secretaries General are the managers with the largest number of bosses and they are all politicians. He said it demands a lot of intelligence to manage. Following on from the remarks of Mr El Khadi, he said that if we repeat topics in the Association it is necessary because many members of the Association will change over 3 or 5 years so we return to important issues. For the benefit of newer colleagues, we look at these perennial issues.

Mr Xolile George, South Africa, noted that in South Africa the Executive is not involved at all in the appointment of the Clerk. He said the Clerk is appointed for 5 years with an option to renew. The process is run by the executive authority of Parliament itself but the House takes the ultimate decision on the appointment. He asked who sits on the Parliamentary Service Commission – MPs or MPs and experts?

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, noted the most difficult aspect of our work is impartiality. This is what ensures us respect in our role, ensuring all legislators have confidence in the Secretary General.

Ms Fiona Kalemba, Malawi, responded to Morocco that she agreed entirely with his assessment. It is a matter of adapting and navigating political waters every single minute. She noted Clerks are not like other leaders, and this is not well understood by the Executive. They work with a diverse and unpredictable group of politicians who have varying levels of education and who regularly look at the clerk as if they are a political animal. Clerks constantly have to prove their impartiality.

In response to The Gambia and South Africa, she said the Parliamentary Service Commission is a corporate body made up of MPs from all the major parties. Since

2021, the law has added distinguished external people. In practice, they have not yet been recruited. There are 5 politicians appointed by the House that recommend the Clerk. There are 2 scenarios, a Clerk can either serve under a speaker of a different party than the one that appointed them or the same one. It is difficult to remove the Clerk because you need concurrent decisions of the President and the Parliamentary Services Commission. In the past, she said there has been a recommendation to remove a Clerk by the President which was rejected by the Commission.

With regards to the minimum qualification, the current law formalised an older practice from before the independence process. She said the Malawi Parliament has always had this rule. She noted it disadvantages experienced Clerks in the House who are not senior legal officers and that sometimes an external person comes in to take over who has this qualification. In response to Angola, she said the role requires Clerks to work under the pleasure of the President. She noted the observation and agreed it is good to repeat topics.

4. Communication by Dr Ahmed Abd Elghani, Egyptian Senate

Dear colleagues,

At the outset of my speech, I am pleased to convey my sincere appreciation to you all. It is a distinct honor to address this esteemed gathering convened by the Association of Secretaries-General of National Parliaments ASGP, on the sidelines of the 152nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This meeting plays an important role in enhancing joint coordination and cooperation among the Secretaries-General of national parliaments, and exchanging experiences which, in turn, contributes to the enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of work within these parliaments.

Our meeting today addresses a matter of great importance, namely: “Mechanisms for the appointment of Secretaries-General of parliaments and the determination of their roles and competencies.” This topic reflects the core of institutional parliamentary work and highlights the significance of the administrative and technical functions in supporting legislative and oversight roles.

It should be noted that the General Secretariat of parliament in all countries, headed by the Secretary-General, constitutes one of the fundamental pillars underpinning the institutional structure of the legislative authority. It serves as the administrative and technical body that ensures the regularity and continuity of parliamentary functions. Its role goes beyond the provision of logistical support, extending to active

participation in organizing legislative procedures and facilitating members' constitutional duties.

Distinguished attendees,

As you are well aware, countries' constitutions in most cases generally do not include detailed provisions specifying the procedures regarding the appointment of the Secretary-General of parliament. This matter is usually left to the rules of procedures or the organizing laws enacted by the parliament itself, which provides the legislative institution with a degree of flexibility in managing its internal affairs, in accordance with the nature of the political system and the surrounding legal environment.

Consequently, there is a noticeable variation among countries regarding the mechanisms for appointing Secretaries-General of parliaments, whether in terms of the competent authority, the procedures followed, or the criteria applied in selecting candidates. In some parliaments, appointment is carried out by the parliamentary bureau, where the Speaker of the chamber proposes a suitable candidate for the position, and this nomination is then submitted to the bureau for approval.

This is the approach adopted by the Egyptian Senate, where Article 279 of the Senate's Rules of Procedures stipulates that "The Secretary-General shall be appointed by a decision of the Bureau of the Senate upon the nomination of its Speaker, and the Speaker shall inform the Senate at the next session."
In other cases, the parliamentary assembly itself may play a role in the appointment process, either through a direct vote or by approving a nomination submitted by the parliamentary bureau. In some systems, the executive authority participates in the appointment of the Secretary-General, either directly by issuing the appointment decision or indirectly by influencing the nomination process, reflecting the state's desire to select individuals with extensive administrative or legal expertise, particularly when the position requires advanced skills in public administration

Dear Colleagues,

Despite the variation in the mechanisms for appointing the Secretary-General across different systems, there exists a set of conditions and criteria that all such systems consistently seek to ensure in any candidate. Foremost among these is academic qualification, with a preference generally accorded to candidates possessing a legal specialization, given the nature of parliamentary work, which demands a thorough understanding of legislative texts and legal procedures. Practical experience also constitutes an essential requirement, as the candidate is typically expected to have previously held administrative or legal positions that equip him/ her to navigate through the complexities inherent in parliamentary work.

In addition, professional competence and integrity constitute fundamental requirements for holding this office. The Secretary-General must possess a good reputation and demonstrate the capacity to take objective decisions, free from political pressures.

Political neutrality is also an essential element, as the Secretary-General must be able to engage with the full spectrum of parliamentary groups and currents without bias, thereby ensuring the maintenance of balance within the legislative institution.
With regard to the term of office of the Secretary-General, this varies across political systems. In some states, the term is fixed for a specified period, which may be renewable once or multiple times. In other states, it is linked to the parliamentary session, concluding with the end of the legislative term. There are also systems in which no specific term is specified, with the Secretary-General remaining in office until a decision is issued to conclude his/ her appointment.

This diversity reflects differing perspectives on the nature of the office, and on the extent to which priority should be given either to ensuring administrative stability or to allowing for rejuvenation.

Distinguished Attendees,

A close examination of the mandates of Secretaries-General across various parliaments, as set forth in their respective rules of procedure and internal regulations - despite differences in drafting, whether detailed or concise - reveals a set of common principles. Among these is that the Secretary-General serves as the leader of a work team tasked with ensuring the orderly and efficient functioning of the Senate. In this capacity, the Secretary-General bears primary responsibility for translating the Parliament’s mission into action and for overseeing the execution of all activities necessary to support the Senate’s organs in the exercise of their roles and responsibilities.
The principal function of the Secretary-General of Parliament is to oversee the conduct of all parliamentary business, to provide the services and facilities necessary for the members of parliament to perform their duties, and to supervise the work of all departments of the General Secretariat.

In this capacity, the Secretary-General acts as the higher authority and direct head of all staff, exercising full financial and administrative powers in relation to them.
The Secretary-General also attends the Senate sittings, monitors the draft agenda of its meetings, and oversees the preparation of plenary sittings, including the recording of their minutes, while ensuring the provision of the necessary technical and logistical support. Furthermore, the Secretary-General supervises the work of the standing committees in preparing their meetings, drafting their reports and

formulating the draft laws referred to them and follows up on the implementation of their recommendations as approved by the Senate.

The Secretary-General acts as a vital link among all departments operating within the Senate. He oversees both strategic and operational plans to ensure their coherence and integration, verifies the effective execution of tasks and the achievement of intended objectives, as well as the development of the capacities and skills of staff by identifying their needs, providing appropriate guidance and monitoring their performance.

At the external level, the Secretary General oversees the communications conducted by the Secretariat of the Senate with national parliaments and international parliamentary bodies. He participates in conferences and events, in accordance with the decisions of the Senate's Bureau, and undertakes the proposal and implementation of parliamentary visit programmes. He also supervises the preparation of draft resolutions, working papers and studies related to items on the agendas of international parliamentary conferences, follows up on the participation of the Senate's delegations in such events, and ensures the preparation of reports on their outcomes.

Mr. Chairman,

The rapid and successive political, economic and social developments, at both the domestic and international levels, have placed increasing demands on the Parliament as a unique institution which simultaneously embodies the expression of the citizens' aspirations and concerns, while also discharging its core functions of legislation, oversight and participation in the formulation of public policy, in addition to the important role the Parliament plays within the diplomatic and international sphere. With the growing complexity and interdependence of the issues under consideration, greater efforts are now required from the Secretary-General and the supporting team to effectively address these matters. This, in turn, necessitates the continuous development of the capacities of those serving within the parliamentary Secretariat, and the provision of extensive training and specialized knowledge.

In this context, we look forward to a more prominent role for the Association of Secretaries General of National Parliaments in deepening cooperation, coordination, and sustained communication among its members, with a view to exchanging perspectives, ideas, and information on ways to further advance parliamentary institutions and strengthen the capacities of their staff.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your kind attention. I am confident that our current meeting will fulfill our shared objectives and aspirations, particularly in view of the participation of this distinguished group

of Secretaries-General, who possess extensive experience in institutional parliamentary work.

I extend to you all my best wishes for continued success and sound judgment in all your endeavors.

5. Communication by Mr Abdualla Mussa, House of Representatives of Libya

His Excellency Mr. José Pedro Montero, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP).
Excellencies and Distinguished Colleagues, Secretaries General of National Assemblies and Parliaments,
Peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you

At the outset of this intervention, it gives me great pleasure to express my profound appreciation for the importance of addressing the mechanism for appointing Secretaries General in national parliaments and assemblies. This topic holds significant institutional value in strengthening parliamentary governance and ensuring the effective administrative and organizational functioning of legislative institutions.

Raising this issue in our meeting today embodies our collective commitment to consolidating the principles of transparency and efficiency. It further reflects the prestige of the parliamentary institution and its pivotal role in serving the people.

It is worth noting that the mechanisms for appointing Secretaries General vary from one parliament to another, depending on the internal rules and regulations applicable in each country. Appointment may occur by a decision of the Presidency, through an internal vote, or via specific regulatory procedures designed to ensure the selection of highly qualified individuals capable of managing the affairs of the General Secretariat with efficiency and competence. In this context, the Internal Regulations of the Libyan House of Representatives, issued under Law No. (4) of 2014, defined the mechanism for appointing the Chief of the Diwan (who represents the General Secretariat of the House of Representatives). Article (207) stipulates that: "The Chief of the Diwan of the House of Representatives shall be appointed by a resolution of the House from among three candidates nominated by the Presidency Office, based on professional criteria related to the duties of the position, provided that the candidate receives the approval of the majority of the members present." The Secretary General is responsible for overseeing all departments, divisions, and

offices affiliated with the House.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
This mechanism enshrines the principles of transparency and institutional oversight. By selecting the Secretary General from among three candidates based on rigorous professional criteria, and subsequently submitting the nomination to the House for a definitive vote, we ensure that the appointee commands the confidence of the majority of members present. Such a process reflects the spirit of internal democracy, reinforces the principle of collective decision-making, and invests the office with profound representational weight and high credibility.

The significance of this mechanism lies in its embodiment of institutionalism, granting the position a firm parliamentary legitimacy. This ensures that the incumbent is a figure of consensus among members, thereby safeguarding the independence of the administrative and technical apparatus from any external influences or individual biases. Furthermore, this framework strengthens the separation of powers within the House; it ensures that legislative, oversight, and representative functions remain the exclusive prerogative of the members, while the Secretary General of the House of Representatives manages the technical, administrative, financial, and organizational affairs. This mandate encompasses supervising departments, divisions, and offices; coordinating the vital support required by the House, its members, and its committees; providing specialized technical consultations; following up on the implementation of resolutions; and representing the House in regional and international parliamentary forums.

In addition, the Secretary General of the House of Representatives enjoys significant prerogatives, including the appointment of heads of the General Secretariat branches across Libyan cities and the oversight of all technical, administrative, and financial departments. The Secretary General is also tasked with drafting the internal regulations governing the General Secretariat, as well as the specialized statutes for the House's staff. These authorities render the Secretary General a fundamental pillar in ensuring institutional continuity and fostering a stable, efficient organizational environment one that is essential to supporting the legislative and oversight functions of the House.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
The clarity and precise definition of these competencies significantly enhance institutional effectiveness and uphold the principles of good governance. This contributes to the building of a robust and efficient administrative apparatus that serves as a cornerstone for legislative and oversight functions. Furthermore, it presents a distinguished image of the Libyan House of Representatives, both domestically and internationally, as an institution founded on democratic pillars

one that accords the highest priority to competence, transparency, and professionalism in selecting its administrative leadership.
In highlighting the importance of this mechanism, we consider it a fundamental pillar for ensuring the independence of the parliamentary institution.

It strengthens the citizens' trust in their representative assembly, thereby consolidating democratic values and serving the supreme national interest.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that our discussion today is not merely an organizational matter; rather, it is a reflection of a sincere collective will aimed at developing parliamentary work and strengthening the role of the General Secretariat as a pivotal pillar in the success of the legislative institution. The adoption of this mechanism has contributed to building a robust institution, qualified to fulfill its national and international responsibilities and capable of facing challenges with efficiency. This reflects a distinguished image of parliamentary work and reinforces citizens' confidence in their constitutional institutions.

Thank you for your kind attention, and I wish our meeting every success.

Mr Kamoru Ogunlana, Nigeria asked whether there was a procedure for removing the Secretary General from office.

Mr Ebenezer A. Djietror, Ghana asked whether the Secretary General's term of office was time-bound.

Mr Abdualla Mussa, Libya explained that in Libya, the Secretary General could be removed from office following a motion tabled by either the Speaker or several parliamentarians, which would then be put to a vote.

Regarding the duration of the term, he indicated that the law made no specific provision. The term could therefore continue until retirement age, unless a motion terminating the Secretary General's tenure was adopted.

6. Communication by Mr Philippe Schwab, Federal Assembly of Switzerland

The Secretary General of the Swiss Parliament: a key player in maintaining institutional equilibrium and administrative continuity within a bicameral system

1. Introduction: Two chambers, yet one Secretary General

Switzerland is a federal state. This defines the structure of its Parliament, which consists of two chambers: the National Council, representing the people, and the Council of States, representing the cantons. Together they form the Federal Assembly. These two chambers, which have strictly equal powers, generally deliberate items of business separately and participate in the legislative process on an equal footing, with neither having formal or substantive primacy (symmetrical bicameralism). Neither chamber has priority in the consideration of bills: a bill may be considered first by either chamber. The adoption of any parliamentary decision therefore requires the agreement of both chambers; otherwise, the bill is abandoned. This requirement for dual approval necessitates close cooperation and a continual search for compromise between the two bodies.
The two chambers have the same status and follow the same procedures.[1] There are only a small number of organisational and procedural differences, which are covered by separate regulations.[2] For example, the National Council is the only chamber to hold question time with the government and impose limits on speaking time.
Both chambers are subject to a unified parliamentary budget and administration, under the exclusive authority of Parliament. This autonomy, both budgetary (as provided for by law[3]) and administrative (guaranteed by the Constitution[4]), underscores the institutional independence of the legislature from the executive. However, this complete control does not prevent budget requests from taking into account the constraints imposed on the state's financial system, such as compliance with the debt brake.[5]

The institutional and administrative integration of the two chambers is also reflected in the fact that there is a single Secretary General, a key figure in the parliamentary administration.

2. Role and responsibilities of the Secretary General: administrator and strategist

2.1. Legal framework and institutional position

The post of Secretary General of the Federal Assembly is the institution's highest administrative office. It is a strictly non-political post governed by a multifaceted

[1] See, for example, the Federal Act of 13 December 2002 on the Federal Assembly (Parliament Act, ParlA); Federal Act of 18 March 1988 on Remuneration and Infrastructure of Members of the Swiss Councils and on the Contributions to the Parliamentary Groups; Federal Assembly Ordinance of 3 October 2003 on the Parliament Act and on Parliamentary Administration (Parliamentary Administration Ordinance, PAdminO); Federal Assembly Ordinance of 28 September 2012 on International Parliamentary Relations (OIPR); Federal Assembly Ordinance of 18 March 1988 to the Parliamentary Resources Act (ParlRO).
[2] Standing Orders of the National Council of 3 October 2003 (NCSO); Standing Orders of the Council of States of 20 June 2003 (CSSO).
[3] Art. 142 paras 2 and 3, ParlA.
[4] Art. 155 of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of 18 April 1999 (Cst.).
[5] Art. 126 Cst.

legal framework: constitutional (Art. 155 of the Constitution), legislative (Arts 64–70 ParlA, Arts 17–35 PAdminO) and regulatory.[6]

The Secretary General's primary mission is to ensure the continuity, stability and effectiveness of parliamentary work by ensuring that Parliament functions smoothly in both administrative and procedural terms.

2.2. A threefold function: administration, advice and liaison

The Secretary General fulfils three complementary roles:[7]

(i) Head of Parliament's administration

He oversees administrative services, optimises the allocation of human and material resources, and chairs the management board of the Parliamentary Services, which comprises heads of various services (committees, digital services, international affairs, communications, human resources and finance, etc.). He sets strategy[8] and ensures that the necessary resources are available for parliamentary business.

(ii) Chief of Staff to Parliament

He acts as the primary point of contact for Council presidents and members of Parliament, plans committee meetings and sessions, prepares agendas, ensures that the legislative timetable is adhered to, and produces minutes and translations. The various services provide technical and procedural support to members of Parliament and serve as the secretariat for the offices of the Federal Assembly and its two chambers.

(iii) Institutional liaison

He facilitates the communication of parliamentary proceedings, manages administrative relations with the government, and supports parliamentary diplomacy (relations with foreign parliaments, international organisations and delegations). As such he contributes to the institution's transparency and to inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The Secretary General is accountable to Parliament as a whole, in accordance with the rules of procedure and the budget set by the Federal Assembly. His work, which is entirely free from partisan considerations, is driven by a commitment to public service for the benefit of all members of Parliament. On a day-to-day basis, he reports directly to the presidents of the two Councils that make up the Administration Delegation. The latter exercises overall responsibility for the administration of Parliament.[9]

[6] Regulations of the Parliamentary Services of 16 May 2014.

[7] The masculine form used always refers to both men and women. We have chosen not to use multiple designations for the sake of clarity.

[8] Parliamentary Services' 2022+ Strategy of 17 October 2022. The new strategy will be finalised by the end of 2026.

[9] Art. 38 para. 2 ParlA.

3. Institutional balancing act: neutrality, permanence and independence

The Secretary General holds a unique institutional position, acting as a liaison between the administrative and political spheres. The role requires not only managerial and technical skills, but also a keen understanding of the political dynamics inherent in parliamentary work.

This position exposes the officeholder, as well as the parliamentary administration he heads, to a number of structural constraints.

3.1. Neutrality and impartiality in a politicised environment

The Secretary General operates in an environment characterised by politicised debates and shifting power dynamics. In the face of political pressure, the Secretary General must demonstrate strict impartiality. It is his responsibility to treat all members of Parliament equally and to avoid becoming a tool for partisan interests. His credibility rests above all on his skill and professionalism. To be able to advise members of Parliament effectively, he must, of course, have a thorough understanding of the workings of politics and the dynamics of influence between parties, while maintaining the necessary distance to carry out his duties. The Secretary General does not interfere in the political substance of parliamentary business but ensures that procedures are followed correctly and impartially. The Secretary General may be a member of a professional organisation or a political party but does not take a public stance on their behalf. Generally speaking, he exercises his freedom of expression in a manner consistent with his role and shows restraint.

3.2. Permanence and adaptability in the face of political instability

In a parliamentary context characterised by shifting majorities and unpredictable decisions, the Secretary General is a pillar of institutional stability. His role is essential in ensuring the continuity of the institution,[10] regardless of political shifts or changes in the parliamentary majority. He ensures the legal certainty of the procedures applied in Parliament, in accordance with both statutory and unwritten law.[11] As the guardian of the institution's institutional memory, he preserves and passes on parliamentary traditions and customs, thereby reinforcing the institution's stability in the face of political upheavals and changes in personnel. This stability goes hand in hand with the need to adapt, enabling the organisation to respond swiftly to unforeseen situations and meet new challenges, particularly in the areas of digital transformation and the integration of artificial intelligence. In certain situations, it is also a matter of preventing attempts to circumvent procedures, which may be justified by the legitimacy associated with holding a majority share of power.

[10] The report supporting the revision of the Parliament Act states that "the Parliamentary Services (…) are also mandated to work actively and on their own initiative to safeguard and promote the interests of Parliament as an institution, as well as the interests of its bodies." (Report of the National Council's Political Institutions Committee in support of the draft Parliament Act, 1 March 2001, FF **2001** 3397).

[11] See, for example, the compilation of decisions and practices of the Office of the National Council, dated 23 August 2024.

3.3. Independence and the separation of powers

The independence of the Parliamentary Services, headed by the Secretary General, is a corollary of the principle of the separation of powers. This independence from the government enables Parliament to exercise its legislative and supervisory powers to the full (Arts 169–170 Cst.), without being dependent on the Federal Administration. It strengthens the legislature's ability to compete with the often more structured expertise of the executive, thereby contributing to the democratic balance of power ('checks and balances').

4. Selection and appointment procedure: ensuring competence and legitimacy

The procedure for appointing the Secretary General is largely shaped by the specific nature of the responsibilities entrusted to him. It is designed to ensure that the holder of the post has the requisite professional skills, administrative impartiality and institutional legitimacy.

The Secretary General is selected following an open recruitment process. This ensures equal treatment of internal and external candidates and guarantees the transparency of the procedure, prioritising professional skills regardless of any partisan considerations. Selection is based on an assessment of applications and interviews, supplemented by in-depth assessments. In practice, however, internal candidates (from the parliamentary administration) have a comparative advantage, owing to their knowledge of procedures and how the institution operates. In this regard, it is telling that the last four Secretaries General appointed since the early 1990s have all come from within the parliamentary administration.

The appointment follows an election by the Offices of both chambers, followed by confirmation by the United Federal Assembly. The Secretary General is the only member of the parliamentary administration whose appointment is subject to a formal decision by Parliament, taken by secret ballot.

This method of appointment strengthens the Secretary General's legitimacy and authority within the institution. Appointed for the duration of the parliamentary term (four years), his term of office is generally renewed, thereby ensuring administrative continuity.

From this perspective, the appointment procedure is not to be understood as a mere formal mechanism for selecting candidates, but as an institutional framework designed to ensure that an individual's profile is suited to a structurally defined role. Its aim is less to assign a role than to select the person best suited to fulfil a role already determined by the needs of the parliamentary system.

As such, the appointment of the Secretary General does not create the post: it reveals what the post demands**.**

5. Conclusion: A discreet yet strategic player in parliamentary governance

The Secretary General of the Swiss Parliament, although not very visible on the political scene, plays a central role within the political and institutional framework. Through his work, he contributes to Parliament's organisational efficiency, the legal certainty of its legislative activity and the continuity of its institutional functioning. By ensuring that procedures are followed, that legislative work is prepared to a high standard, and that the Assembly's bodies are coordinated, he plays a direct role in ensuring the robustness and consistency of parliamentary legislation.

In addition to these functions, he also plays a key role in maintaining institutional stability. In a political environment characterised by shifting majorities and changing power dynamics, the parliamentary administration he heads provides a sense of continuity. He preserves the institution's institutional memory and ensures the transmission of practices, expertise and procedural rules that enable Parliament to function in an orderly and predictable manner.

So, although the Secretary General carries out his duties relatively discreetly and tends to remain behind the political scene, he occupies a strategic position at the heart of the parliamentary system. By striking a balance between administrative neutrality and the demands of the political process, he contributes to the smooth functioning of Parliament as an institution and, more broadly, to the quality of democratic governance.

Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada, requested clarification regarding the selection criteria for the Secretary General, particularly the profile sought. He raised questions concerning official languages and whether proficiency in them is a prerequisite for the position.

Mr Salim Djalal, Algeria sought clarification on the procedures for renewing the Secretary General's mandate.

Mr Emmanuel Odo, Nigeria explained that he is the senior administrative officer for the Nigerian Senate's parliamentary administration and is responsible for implementing government circulars. He wished to know whether this matter applied to Switzerland and, if so, whether implementing such directives requires parliamentary approval or can be carried out directly.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, said that in Uruguay the Secretary General plays a political role. The vote takes place in the Senate. He once attended a meeting in Spain on the role of Secretaries General, and a colleague reminded him about impartiality principles.

Mr Damien Chamussy, France noted that, in some systems, a single Secretary General serves both chambers, though this struck him as relatively rare. He wished

to know whether other parliaments were organized like the Swiss Parliament—with a single Secretary General for both chambers—or, while lacking a single Secretary General, nevertheless utilised shared services.

He explained that, under the French model, the administrations of the two chambers are separate, although any potential drawbacks are mitigated by daily collaboration. He added that even where there is no single Secretary General, some parliaments do have shared services.

Ms Elaine Gunn, Ireland noted that the Irish system is similar to Switzerland's, with both houses of Parliament sharing a joint administration. However, she explained that while she serves as Secretary General for both houses, she acts as Clerk only for the House of Commons.

Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland provided details regarding the selection criteria for the Secretary General. He indicated that these include holding a university degree—though not necessarily in law—as well as organizational leadership experience and interpersonal skills, particularly the ability to interact with sometimes difficult counterparts. He also emphasized that proficiency in the three official languages (French, German, and Italian) as well as English is required.

Regarding the term of office, he explained that the Secretary General is elected for a four-year term, coinciding with the legislative period. He added that the renewal process takes place six months prior to the change of legislature and is decided by the outgoing parliament. He noted that this renewal is generally tacit: unless a party requests a new election, the Secretary General is reappointed by parliamentary consensus. He also indicated that the term may conclude at the end of the four years without the need for a formal motion.

Regarding relations with the executive branch, he emphasized that the Secretary General of the Swiss Parliament implements only those policies decided by Parliament itself. He stressed that the Government exerts no influence over Parliament, illustrating this separation through the budgetary process: the budget is prepared by the parliamentary administration and then voted on by Parliament, without Government intervention. He thus highlighted the strict separation between the executive and legislative branches.

Finally, he clarified that the Secretary General is responsible for both Swiss chambers. However, he noted that he sits in the National Council, while his deputy sits in the Council of States, with both chambers sharing the same legislation and procedures. He added that similar models of joint administration exist in countries such as Austria and Ireland. In his view, this type of organization offers advantages

regarding resource pooling, recruitment, IT systems, and training. He also emphasized that the administration and the Secretary General play a central role in coordinating work and identifying shared solutions.

7. Communication by Mr Antonio Mahumane, Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique

Distinguished Secretaries-General;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great honour and pleasure that I address you in my capacity of Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, a position I assumed in May 2025 and to which I was formally appointed in November of the same year. Dear colleagues, as soon as I learned that the Spring Session of our ASGP was to be held here in this beautiful city of Istanbul, I decided to prepare a paper entitled *"Appointment, Powers and Duties of the Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique"*, as part of the broader theme *"How are Secretaries-General appointed and what is the scope of their role?"*.

In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that the Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic appoints the Secretary-General after consultation with the Standing Committee, which is the Bureau of Parliament, composed of Members of Parliament from all parliamentary groups, in accordance with their respective representation, based on percentages. Such an appointment is made on a temporary basis from among individuals of recognised competence and integrity, with more than ten years' management experience in the public administration.

In the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, the Secretary-General, who holds the status of a senior state official, heads the executive branch of Parliament, assisted by two Directors-General, one in charge of the legislative business and another in charge of planning, administration and finance.

Dear Colleagues;
The Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique is accountable for managing and coordinating all technical and administrative support services for parliamentary activities, ranging from legislative business to social support, including areas such as specialist technical advisory services, parliamentary documentation, public relations and protocol, inter-parliamentary cooperation, planning, implementation and administrative, financial, property and human resources management, capacity building and training, including the preparation of proposals for the award of scholarships to attend courses or undertake traineeships at national and international institutions, amongst other matters deemed relevant under the law.
Likewise, it is the responsibility of the Secretary-General to resolve the day-to-day administrative issues of the Assembly of the Republic and to perform any other

duties assigned to him by order of the Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic, as well as to represent the Secretariat-General before the State administration and other national and international bodies, including the conclusion of cooperation agreements with counterpart institutions and other partners.

A particularly important aspect of the Secretary-General's portfolio is the preparation of the draft budget, the balance sheet report, the trial balances and the Management Account of the Assembly of the Republic for each financial year, as well as the monthly trial balances on budget implementation; these documents are crucial to the implementation of Parliament Annual Work Programmes and the accountability process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues;
The list of powers I have just outlined represents a summary of the provisions set out in Law No. 13/2013 of 12 August, which establishes the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, currently in force.

However, given the dynamic nature of organisations, it is worth noting that this law is currently under review, in order to bring it into line with current demands; one of the areas to be improved concerns the powers of the Secretary-General, given our view that some of the Board of Administrators' current powers are misplaced. Examples of such powers include the preparation of activity programme and budget proposals, the report and the Management Account, as well as proposals for the appointment, promotion, progression and mobility of civil servants and staff working for the Assembly of the Republic, which we believe should fall exclusively within the remit of the Secretary-General, in his capacity as coordinator of technical and administrative support services for parliamentary activity.

Mr President of the ASGP, Dear Secretaries-General, respected colleagues, this sums up my remarks on the topic *"How are Secretaries-General appointed and what is the scope of their role?"* based on the specific example of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Ms Anabela CABRAL FERREIRA, Portugal, noted use of the words impartiality and neutrality in the presentation. However, recognising the words of the President, she said impartiality is clearly important but neutrality is also vital.

Impartiality means treating all parties and MPs equally, without harming or benefitting, she said they all agree this is important. As for neutrality, she said it is about putting the interests of parliament above that of the individual. For example, in the choice of appointment of staff, promotion should be on merit rather than on the basis of partisan appointment. She concluded by saying she could not understand how neutrality could be anything other than essential.

Mr Kamoru OGUNLANA, Nigeria, said the law says when it comes to notifying assent to bills, the role is performed by the Clerk and it is not possible to delegate this function. He asked, when the position of Clerk is vacant, who plays the role?

Dr Antonio Mahumane, Mozambique, replied to Nigeria that, in the absence of the Secretary General there are two Director-Generals and either of them can replace the Secretary General during a period of absence. He said it's important to clarify, on the point about neutrality, the Secretary General is a public servant who has a minimum experience of 10 years' experience of management in the public sector. The Secretary General is responsible for neutrality as a leader. However, one cannot always control individuals completely.

8. Communication by Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, House of Representatives of Thailand

Mr. President,
Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Secretariat of the House of Representatives, Thailand, I would like to present the Communication under the theme "How are Secretaries General appointed and how do we define the scope of the role?" under the topic "The Secretary General of the House of Representatives, Thailand: Authority, Duties, and Appointment"

Introduction: Bicameral system

Thailand has a bicameral legislature. Our parliament's official name is the National Assembly, which is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House and the Senate each is supported by its own secretariat, led by its respective Secretary General. Thailand doesn't have a designated secretariat for the National Assembly. However, during joint sittings of the National Assembly, the Secretary General of the House of Representatives serves as the secretary to such meetings.

The Secretary General of the House of Representatives' Authority and Duties

The Secretary General of the House of Representatives is the highest-ranking official of the Secretariat of the House of Representatives of Thailand. The position has authority and duties under the Rules of Parliamentary Administration Act B.E. 2554 (2011).

The Secretary General is responsible for the general administrative work of the House, supporting the legislative process, overseeing the scrutiny of government administration, advising on parliamentary procedures and practices, and serving as the secretariat for meetings of the House and the National Assembly to ensure that legislative operations are carried out efficiently. In performing the duties, the

Secretary General may have Deputy Secretaries General in order to assist in carrying out the work of the House. According to the said rules, the Secretariat currently has 8 Deputy Secretaries General.

Age of Retirement

Like all the civil servants, the Secretary General retires at the end of the fiscal year, September 30th, in which they turn 60. Because of the difference between the fiscal year and the calendar year, a person who was born on October 1st and another person who was born on October 2nd of the same year will retire in different calendar year. To Illustrate, the first one will retire on September 30th of the year they turn 60, and the second one will retire the following year.

The Secretary General and the Parliamentary Officials Commission (POC)

The Secretary General also serves as the secretary of the Parliamentary Officials Commission (POC), which is a statutory board appointed to make policies and strategies, as well as prescribe rules and guidelines regarding human resources management of both secretariats of the House, and of the Senate.

How the Secretary General is Appointed

The Secretary General serves as the link between the Members of Parliament and the permanent administrative operations, ensuring that the work of the House of Representatives proceeds effectively in accordance with the Constitution and parliamentary rules of procedures. Therefore, officials under the age of 60 with extensive experience in the parliamentary administration and currently in service or used to hold the position of Deputy Secretaries General will be considered for the position of Secretary General. The selection process has been in effect in order to ensure that the most qualified official is appointed in this prestigious position.

1. It begins in the fiscal year in which the current Secretary General will retire. The Speaker of the House of Representatives will appoint a Selection Committee.

2. The Selection Committee will conduct CV screening and assessment of the candidates' qualification. Then, the Selection Committee will propose the most qualified candidate, with the rationale for selection, to the Speaker of the House.

3. After that, the Speaker of the House will nominate the candidate chosen by the Selection Committee to the meeting of the Parliamentary Officials Commission for approval.

4. Upon approval, the Speaker of the House will submit the name of the candidate for Royal Command appointing him or her to the position of Secretary General.

5. After receiving the Royal Command, the newly appointed Secretary General will assume his or her duties following the retirement of their predecessor.

Conclusion

The selection process reaffirms the long-standing principle of the Secretariat of the House of Representatives of Thailand, as well as the Thai Civil Service system in general, that the Secretary General as the head of the organization must be appointed from senior-level members of the career bureaucracy, not political appointees. It also establishes a career path for parliamentary officials. With clear goals, milestones, and professional skills development along the progression from one job to another on the professional ladder, any parliamentary officials can be promoted and potentially rise to the top.

Ms Esther KAAPANDA, Namibia, asked what happens when no-one is interested in the role of Secretary General. She noted there is a limited number of candidates who can take over at retirement. So, she asked how do you nurture a healthy co-existence among those who can apply, as they will eventually compete for the position, how do you avoid conflict between these staff as they work towards the position for many years?

Mr Kamoru OGUNLANA, Nigeria, reflected on the quality of professional candour required for a career as a Clerk. He said that in Nigeria the role is open to all staff, regardless of professional cadre. However, he opined that the appointment should be restricted to staff who work in core legislative posts. He asked whether in Thailand the post is restricted to core legislative staff?

Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Thailand, replied that there is never the problem that nobody wants to be the Secretary General. All eight potential candidates want to be the Secretary General. She opined that this is probably because all the potential candidates are home grown in the parliamentary system and are keen to progress to the top of the profession. Each will have amassed enough experience to feel ready for the role.

In response to Nigeria, she said it is open to all staff who become Deputy Secretary General. If they progress to the top of the profession, they will be eligible, irrespective of which cadre in which they started their career.

Reflecting on past speakers comments about the stress of the role, she observed that Secretary Generals age faster once they are appointed and recommended that her colleagues who are Secretary Generals should keep healthy and happy.

9. Communication by Mr Pedro Agostinho de Neri, National Assembly of Angola

YOUR EXCELENCY PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES-GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS,

ESTEEMED SECRETARIES-GENERAL
DEAR GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMENT,

On behalf of the National Assembly of Angola and on my own behalf, we would like to greet all those present at this great event, which brings together all the Secretaries-General of the IPU parliaments.

Allow us also to send a special greeting to the organizers of the Event, for the welcome and hospitality with which they have offered us since our arrival in this place.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

It is with great appreciation that we address our congratulations for the opportunity to choose the theme of our meeting – which we called "Parliamentary Precedent".

We are confident that this topic will provide a proactive debate and sharing of information on the most diverse aspects that shape today's activity of our parliaments, inside and outside what is enshrined in our legal instruments of operation.

We recall here, Ladies and Gentlemen Secretaries-General, that as guardians of the material and immaterial heritage of our Parliaments, our mission and action must be aimed at preserving good parliamentary practices and rituals, so that they may be passed on from generation to generation.

The Parliamentary Precedent, which we in Angola refer to as Parliamentary Custom, thus has an invisible legal force that presides over the day-to-day of our institutions, including the organizational and protocol aspects resulting from parliamentary work, as the Plenary Meetings, the activities of the Bureau, the Conference of Parliamentary Groups and the Parliamentary Working Committees.

Therefore, we consider it relevant to state that the parliamentary custom refers specifically to practices, conventions and traditions established over time within the functioning of our legislative institutions.

As we all know, these practices play an important role in the organization and dynamics of parliamentary work, although they are not formally codified in laws or regulations.

These customs also help to ensure the continuity and stability of the legislative process, providing a reference framework for the performance of parliamentarians, even in the absence of formal rules.

On the other hand, we must be aware that parliamentary customs may vary from one country to another and in some cases may change over time as new practices emerge and are effectively accepted.

It is in this perspective that we take this opportunity to share with our colleagues that, in the Angolan Parliamentary context, Article 2 of Law N□ 13/17, of 6th of July, which approves the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of Angola, as having validity and legal force, provided that:

- There is no regimental rule applicable.
- Does not contravene the Constitution of the Republic of Angola.
- Does not violate the dignity of the human person; and
- Do not offend the guiding principles of parliamentary activity.

In fact, we wish to note to all present that the assumptions we have just enumerated operate as limits to the validity of parliamentary custom and the application of any precedent.

Therefore, as mentioned above, the customs, as repeated and accepted practices among parliamentarians, find, as a rule, solutions to issues not expressly addressed by the Rules of Procedure and other laws in force.

We believe that, as other parliaments, whose administrations we represent here, parliamentary customs may include several moments, among which, in the case of Angola, we highlight:

1. The constitution of the Bureau at the Constituent Meeting of the National Assembly, which may result from a political negotiation between the parties or political coalitions with parliamentary seats, as happened at the beginning of the Legislature inn September 2022.

2. The voting procedure, which, in our case, can be done virtually, that is, by videoconference, being this a specific form of participation of the MPs in parliamentary activities, which, although it is not regimentally consecrated, had been settled since COVID-19.

3. The Agenda of Plenary Meetings, which is discussed in the Conference of Presidents of the Parliamentary Groups, in which the political representatives of the parliaments participate, even if they are not constituted in parliamentary groups, which are granted the right to vote, although this power is not enshrined in the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly.

MR PRESIDENT,
ESTEEMED COLLEAGUES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

These are just a few examples that we try to share in this hemicycle. Nevertheless, we would like to present you with another example of how our cultural traditions can be consolidated and elevated to the status of parliamentary custom.

We are referring specifically to the symbology and signalling of GONGO, at the time of the entrance of the President of the National Assembly and special guests in the Plenary Hall.

The GONGO is a sound instrument used in African tradition and other parts of the world to announce solemn events.

For this reason, the National Assembly of Angola, rescuing the African culture in general and Angolan, in particular, adopted GONGO as its sound instrument, whose beat signals, as we underlined above, the approach or entry of the highest Entity of our Parliament and other invited entities.

The GONGO is thus used to signal the antechamber of the Plenary Meetings of work or solemn, being that the latter may occur, either by constitutional imperatives, on the occasion of the opening of the legislative year, when the President of the Republic of Angola delivers the speech on the STATE OF THE NATION, either in official visits of Heads of State and Presidents of Parliaments of other countries.

Therefore, Mr President, these examples of the Angolan parliamentary custom that we have highlighted here are just some of the precedents or rituals recorded in official documents of our Parliament.

We could list others, among these, the method of distribution of documents to Members, made by electronic means, which, although not enshrined in the Rules of Procedure, has been implemented since 2016, the result of the process of dematerialization and technological modernization of our Parliament, which contributed greatly to the speed of procedures and economies of scale.

Finally, we thank you once again for the opportunity to share our experience with your distinguished colleagues, hoping that the teachings we receive and will receive on the custom or parliamentary precedent can produce valuable contributions that awaken among us the importance of preserving the institutional memory in our respective parliaments. On behalf of the Angolan Parliament, we thank you for your attention. Thank you very much.

10. Announcement regarding the election

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, announced that, as the deadline of 12.30 had passed, and there was only 1 candidate for the post of ordinary member of the Association, that Mr Sverrir JÓNSSON, Secretary General of the Parliament of Iceland was elected.

12. Concluding remarks

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

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12:45 PM

FOURTH SITTING

Saturday 18 April 2026 (afternoon)

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 2.35PM

1. Introductory remarks

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

2. Presentation on the work of the IPU, Mr Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, remarked that he has had the pleasure and the honour of knowing Mr Chungong for many years, and has watched his son grow from child to adult. He thanked Mr Chungong, not only for his work as Secretary General, but also for enabling the ASGP to have Spanish and Arabic interpretation today.

Mr Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU, thanked the participants for the opportunity to address the ASGP. He spoke of his long-standing friendship with Dr José Pedro Montero, noting that this relationship had helped strengthen cooperation between the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Reflecting on his career, he recalled that he has worked with the Inter-Parliamentary Union since the 1990s—particularly in promoting parliamentary research—and had been responsible for coordinating work between the two organizations. He emphasized the special value he places on the partnership between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, he highlighted several key areas of cooperation, notably work regarding information and communication technologies, which he described as particularly valuable and worthy of continuation. He also mentioned the development of parliamentary libraries, stressing that parliaments rely on knowledge and that these institutions—which are expanding worldwide—play a

vital role. He added that efforts have been made to better understand how to support parliaments in achieving their objectives.

He explained that his collaboration with the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments is grounded in the key role its members play as a link between the political sphere and parliamentary administration. He expressed his admiration for their work and encouraged them to maintain this spirit of cooperation between technical expertise and political decision-making. He also welcomed the opportunity to celebrate the Association's eighty-fifth anniversary with them, describing it as a resilient organisation whose work has continued uninterrupted since the Second World War.

Turning to contemporary challenges, he highlighted the many disruptions facing the world and the essential role parliaments play in maintaining peace. He noted the symbolic significance of holding the meeting in Istanbul against the backdrop of regional conflicts. He also addressed the erosion of democracy and the challenging of certain hard-won gains—particularly regarding gender equality—as well as the resurgence of coups d'état in some contexts. In this regard, he expressed the view that Secretaries General can help parliaments overcome these challenges.

Finally, he drew attention to the rapid rise of new technologies, calling for the establishment of appropriate frameworks to support their evolution. In conclusion, he expressed his satisfaction at having collaborated with the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments throughout his term and wished them success in their future work.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, presented Mr Martin Chungong with a gift on behalf of the ASGP, as a token of thanks.

3. Elections

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, invited Mr Sverrir JÓNSSON
Secretary General of the Parliament of Iceland, to say a few words following his appointment to the Executive Committee.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, indicated that Mr Sverrir Jónsson's term of office would take effect for a period of three years, starting the day after the close of the Istanbul session—20 April 2026—in accordance with Article 18, paragraph 11, of the Association's Rules.

4. GENERAL DEBATE: Does your parliament allow its staff to undertake remote working?

- *Does remote working provide benefits to the organisation? What are the risks?*
- *What are the regulations in your parliament regarding remote working? For example, do you have a minimum number of days required in the office?*
- *Do you have some roles for which it is impossible to offer remote working, and how do you reconcile inequalities?*

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, opened the general debate by saying that in the UK, the issue of remote working has only existed since Covid-19. Before the pandemic, it was incredibly unusual for staff to work at home. This was partly because parliament did not have the technology to support remote working. So, it would only be possible to do a few discrete tasks, such as drafting a report alone, at home. Then, when the pandemic hit, very quickly colleagues were encouraged to work remotely wherever possible and the technology developed incredibly quickly to support that work. Software such a MS Teams and Zoom rapidly improved to facilitate a smooth experience for remote work. Initially, it was poor for large meetings but most of those problems have now been resolved. As well as the technology, she said we as staff all quickly adapted and improved our skills at using these tools.

However, when the pandemic finished, there was a change in expectation from her employees who no longer wanted to come into the office every day for 5 days a week. Many staff wanted to retain the flexibility to work from home several days a week. In the House of Lords, to continue to be competitive and recruit top quality staff it is necessary to offer some flexibility. Consequently, the House of Lords took a gentle approach when it came to re-introducing in-office attendance requirements to ensure this did not result in the loss of valuable staff.

The benefits of flexibility for individuals must be balanced with the risks to the organisations of remote work. Some people must be on the Estate - cleaning staff, catering, security and staff working on legislative procedures – it is not possible for them to work remotely. Whereas, back-office staff such as people who work in finance and human resources could practically do most of their work from home very easily. However, she said this divide led to jealousy between different teams who felt they were paying for travel to work and having reduced flexibility compared to other colleagues.

The House of Commons has taken a slightly different approach, it requires everyone to be present for 40% of the time on the Estate. In the House of Lords, each Department Lead can set the minimum in-office time for staff in their team. In Chloe's team, the requirement is that if the House is sitting, staff must be in the office as she leads a legislative team. Other offices, who are not needed to be in the office, can come in only 1 day a week during sitting times if the Head of Office thinks it appropriate.

With regards to risks, she said there can be fewer opportunities for colleagues to get to know each other or observe each other doing a job for development reasons. This interaction is hard to replicate online. It's harder to get a feel for the culture and the business-as-usual tasks of a role for new starters. So, it is a careful balance between allowing flexibility to ensure parliament can retain quality staff while balancing this with need to absorb culture and share learning. However, some teams, such as software developers, are allowed to work from home all the time as this is the only way to meet the expectations of a competitive job market for this role.

She reflected that the debate today is not about MPs but said it is relevant to say that in the UK the politicians are not able to work from home and this shapes their opinion and expectations about staff working from home.

Mr Eric Tavernier, France, noted that remote work acts as an attractive feature and helps facilitate work organisation for certain staff members, particularly those who are ill or have a disability.

However, he highlighted certain associated risks, specifically the potential for isolation among remote workers and the risk of shifting the workload onto staff present on-site.

He clarified that authorisation for remote work rests with the director, who assesses the nature of the tasks, the operational needs of the department, and each employee's level of autonomy. He noted that approximately 40% of staff have a remote work agreement in place, though this does not necessarily mean they actually make use of the arrangement.

He also specified that certain categories of staff are ineligible for remote work, notably civil servants with less than six months of service, contract staff in their probationary period, and apprentices and interns.

Regarding the organisation of remote work, he stated that the general rule is set at one day per week, with specific adjustments—particularly for IT staff. He added that a minimum of three days of on-site presence is required.

Exceptions may be granted for health reasons, disabilities or during maternity leave. Remote work may also be authorised in exceptional circumstances, such as general transport strikes or health crises.

Finally, he emphasized that certain duties are incompatible with remote work, notably technical roles, maintenance activities, and functions directly linked to sessions and committee proceedings. He noted that differences between positions are taken into account when organising work, particularly through mobility requirements.

Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada, said his experience was similar to that of the UK, remote working became mainstream after the pandemic, before this it was very limited to a few cases.

He said a big difference in Canada is that the Members are allowed to do remote working, remote voting and they spend half the year in their constituencies. The House of Commons is different to the Federal Government which is forcing employees to come back for a certain number of days a week, often it is 4 days a week, and all managers have to be in the office full time.

In the House of Commons, it varies among different offices. Human resources and finance departments can set quite low levels of attendance, whereas procedural offices are always at work when the House is sitting and at home whenever it is not sitting. Depending on the team, in-office attendance varies greatly from 1 to 5 days a week as an expectation. Half-days are also possible. Remote work agreements are agreed on an individual basis between an individual and management.

On the advantages and disadvantages, he agreed that flexibility is required to attract people with a specialist skill set. He said editors, who work over night, can now work from home and now they can attract people from remote provinces to do this job. He agreed on the retention point. He said that as a manager he has personally benefitted from remote work but on some days he is the only person in the office on his floor. However, he also agreed it is hard to train colleagues and on-board them when they are remote working. He also noted that team spirit suffers with remote work as this cannot recreate the same conditions as in-person work with regards to informal interactions between colleagues.

During the pandemic, he said the government let go of some of their office space and now they are mandating people to come back into the office but there is insufficient space to accommodate them.

Mr Edgar SEQUEIRA MARTINS, Timor Leste, explained that, during the pandemic, the national parliament was forced to adapt in order to contain the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring the continuity of its operations. In this context, remote work was made possible, particularly due to border closures that prevented some staff members from returning to Timor-Leste.

He clarified, however, that the general rule remains working on-site. He acknowledged that some studies highlight the benefits of remote work regarding the quality of work and service. Nevertheless, he indicated that his institution chose not to make remote work a permanent feature after the pandemic—not out of a preference for on-site work, but due to productivity requirements, as productivity was deemed higher without remote work.

He explained that the drop in productivity observed during remote work was largely due to inadequate working conditions, such as a lack of internet access or suitable IT equipment. He emphasized that the Parliament of Timor-Leste is unable to provide equipment to all staff members and that internet coverage remains uneven across the country.

Given these circumstances, he stated that the Parliament cannot implement a generalised remote work framework. However, even in the absence of specific legislation, exceptions may be granted in certain situations—particularly when staff members are unable to travel to the workplace. In such cases, remote work is authorized, and efforts are made to provide the necessary equipment.

Mr Salim Djalal, Algeria, said that until recently Algeria has not enacted any remote work protocols. However, the one exception is for I.T engineers who are currently developing the necessary software for a digital transformation of remote work for parliamentary staff. He said this will enable staff to have flexible work, which will help staff who live far from the parliament and spend a long time getting to work. He asked what are the strengths colleagues relied on to enact remote work and whether specific criteria were imposed to accompany remote work arrangements? He also asked about risks which emerged as a result?

Mr Kamoru Ogunlana, Nigeria made a remark regarding the regime of parliamentary immunities and privileges applicable in Nigeria, noting that it is governed by legislation modelled on the British system. He clarified that these immunities and privileges apply solely within the precincts of Parliament—understood as the physical premises of the institution where parliamentary activities take place.

He emphasized that, outside these precincts, parliamentarians fall outside the scope of the law and no longer enjoy this protection. Against this backdrop, he inquired

about the application of these privileges in the United Kingdom, particularly in the context of remote working.

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, remarked that it was a very interesting question of whether advice on parliamentary privilege could be given outside the parliamentary building. In the UK, she said it does not matter where the advice is given from, this does not have a perspective on privilege.

Mr Miguel Landeros Perkic, Chile, explained that the return to democracy in the 1990s transformed certain constraints into opportunities. He noted that, because the Congress was located in a different city from the seat of government, tools such as fax machines had to be used to ensure communication. In his view, this constraint fostered the early digitization of parliamentary work during that period.

He then discussed the 2019 social crisis, which led to constitutional reform. In this context, the two chambers had to operate simultaneously despite being separated by a distance of approximately 100 kilometres. He explained that centralising everything was not feasible, which led to the digitisation of debate transcripts so they could be transmitted from one chamber to the other.

Turning to the pandemic period, he noted that a constitutional reform was adopted to authorize voting from outside Parliament. He highlighted that, prior to the pandemic, approximately 90% of processes were digitised, a figure that rose to 100% subsequently.

Regarding teleworking, he specified that the current policy stipulates a 40-hour workweek, a portion of which may be performed remotely. He noted that the arrangement generally entails two days of remote work and three days on-site, allowing for reduced time spent at the workplace and a better work-life balance.

However, he drew attention to issues concerning oversight and productivity, citing in particular the use of technologies such as facial recognition for Parliament access and the monitoring of IT tool usage. He emphasized that increased attention is being paid to staff productivity.

He also noted that the development of digital infrastructure in Chile—particularly regarding internet access and system security—facilitates the use of teleworking, unlike in other national contexts.

In conclusion, he emphasized the need to preserve a human dimension in the organization of work, noting that politics also relies on direct interactions and human contact.

Dr Said MOKADEM, Maghreb Consultative Council, said that remote work is an exception to the main principle of being physically present at the place and time of work. As a new phenomenon, it impacts communication and exchange of expertise. He asked about potential dangers, which colleagues may have witnessed. First, he asked colleagues whether they had done a survey on the psychological impact on colleagues from remote working? Secondly, whether there has been an increase in the weight of the employees as they are less physically active or having eyesight problems as a result of working in this way?

Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Thailand, said all colleagues work Monday to Friday all day in the parliament. They were allowed to work remotely in the pandemic and, more recently, some colleagues worked from home during the energy crisis in March. Like other colleagues, different teams have a differing abilities to work remotely with success. She remarked that digitalisation has been important as colleagues must have strong internet and technology at home to do work remotely. Initially, the Thai Parliament did not support colleagues with the technology to work from home.

With regards to quality of life, she said the traffic in Bangkok is very bad and remote working allows people to save time they would spend commuting. She said there are cost saving and environmental considerations for remote working in addition to flexibility. On Wednesday and Thursday, she said the people traffic inside Parliament is bad. It is very crowded even though it is a big parliament. So, having people work at home in March during the energy crisis greatly reduced this pressure. She said she though the risks are small compared to the benefits of remote working. However, she noted it reduces the ability of managers to oversee staff work and presents new cyber risks. She agreed with colleagues that it can lead to unfairness between colleagues about who can and cannot have this benefit. There are 70% in office for committees whereas for human resources it could be as low as 50%.

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK remarked that having colleagues prepared to work from home can increase resilience for times of crisis, such as the energy crisis in Thailand.

Mr Jean Mukuala Bateke, Democratic Republic of the Congo stated that remote work is not yet on the agenda in his country. Unlike the situation in many other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic did not lead to the introduction of remote work within the Parliament.

He posed several questions to parliaments that have already implemented such arrangements. In particular, he inquired about the conditions under which remote

work can be integrated into parliamentary operations without compromising the transparency of deliberations or democratic oversight.

He also asked which parliamentary functions could be performed remotely without a loss of quality.

Finally, he raised the issue of the reforms needed to make remote work viable, highlighting the challenges faced in his country, particularly regarding connectivity.

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK said that in the UK they do ask about this is surveys and remote working is very popular. On weight and eyesight, she said her personal experience was that when she worked from home she had time to go to the gym, whereas now she does not have this time.

Mr Xolile George, South Africa noted that, in the United Kingdom, the two chambers employ different mechanisms for organising their work, and inquired how institutional coherence is ensured in this context.

He also asked what mechanisms could be implemented to enable teleworking without reducing productivity. Finally, he asked about the potential reactions of bodies responsible for labour law regarding the teleworking practices adopted.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, said that he is not generally in favour of remote working and was not Secretary General during the time of the pandemic when this protocol was first brought in. As Secretary General he has continued with some of the remote working which was previously put in place. He said it ensures people have longer weekends at home. However, in Uruguay, they have not managed to have a very good control of remote working. Some people request work from home and there is no way to facilitate this. Some roles cannot be done from home at all. During the pandemic, committee members could work from home but had to be on site to vote. He said that Uruguay never cancelled the in-person session, even during the pandemic and they never had an outbreak.

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, responded to the question from Soth Africa about both Houses in the UK having different rules. She said that they are different organisations with different rules so historically there is no expectation of there being the same practice. She said the issue is jealousy between teams in each House.

On measuring the impact, she said you can see if an editor is working from home to edit debates or process questions, you can compare the office and home output. Her view is that productive people are more productive at home and in the office.

The baseline person is more of an indicator than the work location as to productivity.

Mr John Stevens, Belgium, said they distinguish between structural remote work and occasional remote working, such as when the plumber visits or you need to visit a dentist. In Belgium, it is allowed for apprentices. Belgium is trying to decrease from 50% remote working to 30% remote working but there is huge protect from staff. They want people to be on the Estate 2 days a week. This is offered to part-time workers as well as full-time workers. Each Director may allow more remote working than the standard amount if the Secretary General agrees.

Mr Mohamad ALMETAIRI, Saudia Arabia, stated that his institution shares the observations made by previous speakers, while noting that teleworking emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when many staff members were required to work remotely. He highlighted that productivity was deemed satisfactory during the pandemic.

He explained that following this period, despite a surge in requests, the use of teleworking was regulated and restricted to exceptional circumstances, depending on the nature of the tasks involved.

He indicated that teleworking is now authorized on a targeted basis—specifically for activities such as report writing, or for staff working overtime or atypical hours. He added that exceptions may also be granted on humanitarian grounds.

Finally, he mentioned the existence of flexible work arrangements, which allow, for instance, for schedule adjustments—such as offsetting a late arrival with a later departure—to better distribute the workload.

Mr Ingver Mattson, Sweden, reflected that working from home was popular because it is more convenient rather than because it is better for work. It enables you to let the plumber in, look after children and other things but these can also distract from work. He said there is a risk that we lose the limit between work and leisure time and must consider the psychological aspects of the working environment.

The physical conditions matter, you need a desk and technology. However, what he really means is dividing clearly between time you are at work and time you are on leisure. If you cannot be sure when you are working or not, then you might not feel the limits between the two spheres. In the long term, this blurring might be a problem. The he quoted what Nixon said when he was asked about the French Revolution, “it’s too early to say”. He said he feels the same about remote working.

Mr Xolile George, South Africa, indicated that Sweden's intervention prompted him to speak again. He noted that, in some instances, the use of teleworking can lead certain staff members to engage in side activities, such as transport services or commercial ventures.

He emphasized the need to strike a balance and ensure a clear separation between the various spheres of activity in order to safeguard the integrity and effectiveness of parliamentary work.

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, also highlighted the need to strike a balance. Referring to Sweden's remarks, she noted that the difficulty of disconnecting from work is a significant issue, illustrating this point with examples of work-related demands made outside of working hours. She also pointed out that several issues raised in the context of teleworking are not specific to parliaments but reflect broader challenges faced by employers and staff across various sectors. She concluded by thanking the debate participants for their contributions, which she found very interesting.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, commented that it was helpful for him to listen to how different colleagues manage this. He digressed to say that about 10 years ago, there was a telecom company with a great advert that said to be connected, you must be disconnected! He then announced a 15-minute coffee break.

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

5. Communication: Mr Xolile George, Parliament of South Africa, on 'Oversight over the Presidency in the South African Parliament'

This presentation outlines the evolution of parliamentary procedure in the House of Assembly in the South African Parliament concerning legislative oversight over the Presidency as a department of State. By way of introduction, the Republic of South Africa became a constitutional democracy in 1994,[12] just over three decades ago. The final Constitution (1996) established a bi-cameral Parliament, consisting of the National Assembly and the National

[12] The Final Constitution was adopted by Parliament in 1996.

Council of Provinces[13] (NCOP) (previously the Senate). The Assembly for its part is elected by proportional representation with a mandate to –

> *"...ensure Government by the people under the Constitution. It does this by choosing the President, by providing a national forum for public consideration of issues, by passing legislation and by scrutinizing and overseeing executive action.[14]"*

The writers of the Constitution understood that democratic government must be built on the principles of transparency and accountability.[15] Moreover, they realized that the law and parliamentary procedure must leave no ambiguity as to the respective obligations of Parliament and the Executive. To this end, section 42 of the Constitution mandated the Assembly to scrutinize and oversee Executive action. Conversely, the Constitution stated that the Executive must be accountable collectively and individually to Parliament and must provide members with full and regular reports.[16]

During the first years of the democratic order, Parliament considered a plethora of statutes and regulations to foster oversight and accountability. These included, *inter alia*, laws to empower members, to regulate the public service and state finances and to consolidate other independent institutions to support the system of checks and balances.[17] As part of the steps to empower members, Parliament adopted the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act, 2004 (Act 4 of 2004).[18] This Act amplified the constitutional right of members to speak freely in Parliament without fear of prosecution. It also laid down procedures to allow Parliament and its committees to summon any person or organization to

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[13] The NCOP has 90 delegates, ten delegates from each of the nine provincial legislatures, and is mandated to –

> *"...represent the provinces to ensure that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of government. It does this mainly by participating in the national legislative process and by providing a national forum for the public consideration of issues affecting the provinces."*

[14] Section 42 (3) of the Constitution.
[15] See Section 1 of the Constitution: the Founding Provisions.
[16] Section 93 (3) of the Constitution.
[17] These institutions are known as the State Institutions supporting Constitutional Democracy and fall under Chapter 9 of the Constitution.
[18] Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act (Act 4 of 2004) (as amended).

appear or give evidence and made it an offense for any person to refuse a summons, refuse to give evidence or willingly mislead Parliament.

In 1999, Parliament adopted the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (Act 1 of 1999).[19] In terms of the PFMA (supplemented by National Treasury regulations), the National Budget must be divided into separate Votes, one for each Government department (the 2026/27 Main Appropriation Bill[20] currently before Parliament, contains 42 separate Votes). Additionally, each department must submit a strategic plan with measurable objectives for their respective Votes. In terms of parliamentary procedure, the Assembly must consider each Vote individually before it can pass the Budget. Importantly, the Assembly can only amend Budget Votes in accordance with specific procedures as set out in the Money Bills and Related Matters Act (2009). These procedures require that, *inter alia*, any amendment to a departmental budget can ordinarily only come about following detailed scrutiny and report by an oversight committee.

The Constitution also stipulated that Parliament, as an independent arm of State and an oversight body, could determine and control its own internal arrangements, and make rules and orders concerning its business with due regard to representative democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement.[21] To this end, the Assembly must create mechanisms to ensure that all executive organs of state in the national sphere of Government are accountable to it and to maintain oversight over the exercise of National Executive authority.[22] Given the constitutional imperatives, the post-1994 Parliament had to adopt new rules. As one tool to promote accountability, the revised rules put in place an array of portfolio committees to oversee each national department. In terms of the functions of portfolio committees, the rules state, inter alia, that a portfolio committee –

> *"may monitor, investigate, enquire into and make recommendations concerning any such executive organ of state, constitutional institution or other body or institution, including the legislative programme, budget, rationalisation,*

[19] Public Finance Management Act (Act 1 of 1999) (as amended).
[20] Bill 4 of 2026. The Bill can be accessed on Parliament's website.
[21] Sections 57 and 70 of the Constitution.
[22] Section 55 (2) of the Constitution.

restructuring, functioning, organisation, structure, staff and policies of such organ of state, institution or other body or institution…."[23]

Over and above committees, the rules provide for questions to the Executive including the President, the Deputy President and respective ministers. Over the intervening decades, the rules and practices of the Assembly have continued to evolve, building on best practices both domestically and from other legislative assemblies. Among the procedural and oversight issues raised over time, however, was the absence of a committee to oversee the Presidency.

Oversight over the Presidency

The Presidency stands at the apex of the National Executive. It comprises the office of the President, currently Mr M C Ramaphosa, who is both the Head of State and Government;[24] the Deputy President, Mr P S Mashatile, who is the Leader of Government Business (in Parliament)[25] and the Minister in the Presidency, responsible for coordinating Government

[23] National Assembly Rule 227 (1)(c).

[24] Section 84 of the Constitution details the Powers and functions of the President -

84. *(1) The President has the powers entrusted by the Constitution and legislation, including those necessary to perform the functions of Head of State and head of the national executive.*

(2) The President is responsible for—

- *(a) assenting to and signing Bills;*
- *(b) referring a Bill back to the National Assembly for reconsideration of the Bill's constitutionality;*
- *(c) referring a Bill to the Constitutional Court for a decision on the Bill's constitutionality;*
- *(d) summoning the National Assembly, the National Council of Provinces or Parliament to an extraordinary sitting to conduct special business;*
- *(e) making any appointments that the Constitution or legislation requires the President to make, other than as head of the national executive;*
- *(f) appointing commissions of inquiry;*
- *(g) calling a national referendum in terms of an Act of Parliament;*
- *(h) receiving and recognising foreign diplomatic and consular representatives;*
- *(i) appointing ambassadors, plenipotentiaries, and diplomatic and consular representatives;*
- *(j) pardoning or reprieving offenders and remitting any fines, penalties or forfeitures; and*
- *(k) conferring honours.*

[25] Joint Rule 192 (which applies to both the Assembly and NCOP) elaborates on the functions of the Leader of Government Business (also called the LOGB).

strategy and overseeing key administrative entities.[26] The Cabinet Office and the legal and research services offer administrative and advisory services in the Presidency. The budget of these offices is consolidated as Vote 1 – The Presidency, in the National Budget.[27]

Together with these offices, the Presidency houses several other strategic departments and State agencies including the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation; the Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities; the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), Statistics South Africa; and the State Security Agency.[28] Notably, these different departments have separate budget allocations and Votes, and do not fall under Vote 1. In short, the functions of the Presidency could be said to encompass the overall implementation and co-ordination of Government's policy agenda, managing the work of Cabinet and facilitating the Executive's legislative programme.[29]

Parliament has devised various means to oversee certain functionaries and entities within the Presidency. For a start, the President must report to Parliament on the plans and performance of the State when he or she delivers the annual State of the Nation Address, which is the subject of extensive debate within the Legislature. As mentioned, the President and Deputy President respectively are also obligated to answer oral questions in the Assembly four times every year (usually once per quarter). Such sessions can extend to three hours on each occasion. This is in addition to written questions which members pose on a weekly basis. The President also introduces Budget Vote 1 in the National Assembly as part of the budget process. Significantly, the Assembly has ensured that the budgets and operations of some departments and entities within the auspices of the Presidency – those which have their own Budget Votes – are subjected to scrutiny within portfolio committees. This has nevertheless not been the case with Vote 1.

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[26] It may be of interest to note that the President and Deputy President can each designate a member of the Assembly as a special counsellor. In accordance with Assembly Rule 34, these functionaries must *"facilitate communication between the National Assembly and the offices of the President and Deputy President, respectively."*

[27] The proposed budget for the Presidency for the 2026/27 financial year was approximately R820 million, increasing to R900 million in 2028/2029. See the Main Appropriation Bill 2026/27.

[28] Other acts expand on the functions of the Presidency such as the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office-Bearers Act (Act 92 of 1997); the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act, (Act 20 of 1998, as amended); and the Executive Members' Ethics Act, 1998 (Act 82 of 1998), including the Executive Ethics Code.

[29] See also the Annual Reports of the Presidency which can be accessed on the Presidency of South Africa's website.

During the Sixth Parliament (2019-2024) some political parties argued that the absence of committee oversight over Vote 1 was contrary to the demand of law.[30] Others suggested that the Presidency had grown apace in recent years and now incorporated a host of projects and advisors, which necessitated closer oversight.[31] *The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud* (the State Capture Commission) – instituted by former President, Mr J G Zuma to investigate instances of corruption within the State – also recommended that Parliament should consider whether it would be desirable to establish a committee whose function would incorporate oversight over acts or omissions by the President and Presidency, which were not overseen by existing portfolio committees.[32] Former Chief Justice R Zondo, who chaired the State Capture Commission, opined that –

> "*It is not correct that everything for which the President is responsible [is delegated] to a Minister or department outside the Presidency. Our recent history also shows that the President's conduct is not always subjected to adequate oversight by the existing portfolio committees. A process to enable the President and Presidency's conduct to be subjected to more probing scrutiny than is feasible in a plenary session of the National Assembly would therefore appear to be beneficial.*"[33]

Considering these propositions, the National Assembly Rules Committee (the Rules Committee) requested the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) to undertake preliminary research into the matter. The PBO concluded that it was clear that the budget of Vote 1 was not excluded from any of the applicable regulatory and legislative prescripts in existence. The PBO also found that some other parliaments made use of permanent or ad hoc committees as forums of inquiry, although there were limited examples of stand-alone committees to scrutinize the office of the Head of State or Government.

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[30] Especially Section 55 (2) of the Constitution which requires the National Assembly to, *inter alia*, *"provide mechanisms to ensure that all executive organs of state in the national sphere of government are accountable to it; and to maintain oversight of the exercise of national executive authority, including the implementation of legislation."*

[31] On this point, reference could be made to various advisory councils and forums instituted by the Presidency such as the Presidential Economic Advisory Council, the Presidential Climate Commission and National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council among others. Some opposition parties have criticized these initiatives as an attempt to unduly centralize policy making.

[32] The terms of reference of the Commission were issued by proclamation in the *Government Gazette* on 25 January 2018 (Gazette number 41436). The Commission reported to the President who tabled the report in Parliament on 23 October 2023.

[33] State Capture Commission Report: Part VI, Volume II, paragraph 1003.

Based on these observations, the Rules Committee undertook a study tour to assess practices in other jurisdictions. With the evidence of the PBO and the study tour, the matter was again raised soon after the inception of the Seventh Parliament in 2024, when two options were advanced: that the Rules Committee could mandate an existing portfolio committee to oversee the Presidency or establish a dedicated committee for this purpose. At the meeting of 31 October 2024, the Rules Committee endorsed the latter approach and resolved that the House should create a special committee.

An Oversight Committee on the Presidency

While the Rules Committee had decided on the need for a dedicated committee, certain questions of procedure and practice remained. First, there was the question of whether the committee should take the form of a portfolio committee (the Rules Committee establishes portfolio committees at the start of every Parliament) or be otherwise provided for in the rules with a distinct orientation.[34] Another question was whether, and to what extent, the committee should delve into matters beyond the budget and administration of the Presidency. During subsequent deliberations divergent views also emerged about how frequently the President and Deputy President would be expected to appear, and the scope of questions they would be expected to answer. There was also an argument that, given the status of the President and the functions of the Presidency, the committee should have a larger membership compared to other committees to ensure wider participation (the Assembly currently has eighteen political parties).

Following extensive deliberations between parties, the Rules Committee met on 26 November 2025 when it adopted new rules to establish a Committee on the Presidency (the Committee).[35]

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[34] National Assembly Rule 225 states that: *"The Speaker acting with the concurrence of the Rules Committee must —*

(a) establish a range of portfolio committees;

(b) assign a portfolio of government affairs to each committee; and

(c) determine a name for each committee"

The generic functions of portfolio committees are set down in Assembly Rule 227. Portfolio committees in the Assembly can therefore be contrasted with standing committees whose existence and functions are explicitly provided for in law or the rules.

[35] The rules were published in the parliamentary journal called the *Announcements, Tablings and Committee Reports* (or ATC) on 28 November 2025. The ATC is available on Parliament's website.

The rules were later ratified by the House on 2 December 2025. In so doing, the Rules Committee determined that the Committee would consist of eleven members – the same number as portfolio committees – with seven parties represented based on the principle of proportionality. In terms of its specific functions, the rules determined that the Committee –

(1) must maintain oversight over the budget and work of The Presidency in accordance with the applicable law, the rules and the delegation of functions in the Executive;

(2) may call upon the member of the Executive designated by the President to account for the budget and administration of The Presidency;

(3) may call upon the President and Deputy President once per year within the annual programme of the Assembly to discuss policy matters of national or international importance;

(4) must perform any other function assigned to it by legislation, other provisions of these rules, resolutions of the Assembly or referred by the Speaker; and

(5) may adopt guidelines regarding the execution of its mandate including the guidelines to provide for liaisons with the President and Deputy President."

In adopting these procedures, the Rules Committee also proposed possible guidelines to support the Committee. These draft guidelines stated that -

(1) In the determination of its annual programme, the Committee must liaise with The Presidency to prearrange dates for the President and Deputy President to appear before the Committee.

(2) The Committee's annual programme must be developed with due regard to the budget and oversight cycle, as determined by the Money Bills and Related Matters Act (2009) and the rules.

(3) The Committee must, at least 15 working days before the Committee is scheduled to meet the President or Deputy President, provide notice on the subjects to be discussed in the meeting.

(4) The President or Deputy President may, with the approval of the Chairperson, defer a matter for discussion that requires details which are not immediately available. In this event, the Chairperson must make a ruling as to the timeframe in which the President or Deputy President should address the Committee in

writing.

(5) The Chairperson may, subject to the principle of proportionality, impose limitations on the time used by political parties to pose questions to the President and Deputy President.

In the context of the conceptual issues listed above, the rules and draft guidelines contain several notable features. First, it is evident that the day-to-day work of the Committee will be to scrutinize the budget and operations of the Presidency falling under Vote 1. For this reason, the President must designate a member of the Executive to account to the Committee. In this way, the Committee will work in a similar fashion to a departmental portfolio committee, except in so far as the Presidency has unique functions.

Over and above the ordinary work of the Committee, the rules recognize that the President has a special role in the strategic orientation of the Presidency and the State as a whole. Consequently, the Committee can call upon the President and Deputy President every year *"to discuss policy matters of national or international importance".* How these terms will be interpreted by the Committee will become more certain as practices evolve. As one source of guidance, the Committee may draw on the accepted questions procedure,[36] which limit the scope of matters which members can raise with the President and Deputy President (and ministers). In the case of the President, for example, members may only pose questions on, *inter alia*: *"matters in respect of the powers and functions of the President and the executive authority of the Republic that he represents, and matters for which the Government is responsible – this may include line function responsibilities of Ministers where they give rise to issues of national or international concern."*[37] The principles informing questions to the Deputy President may nevertheless not be equally applicable as such questions must relate to responsibilities assigned by the President.[38] As another point, the interaction with the President and Deputy must be a "discussion", which implies an expression or exchange of views, instead of an inquisitorial dynamic.

[36] See Chapter 10 of the National Assembly Rules, read with the guidelines for questions as contained in the ATC of 25 November 2016.
[37] Guidelines for Questions ATC of 25 November 2016, section 4 (1).
[38] Guidelines for Questions ATC of 25 November 2016, section 5.

On a practical level, the rules and proposed guidelines provide that liaisons with the President and Deputy President must be pre-arranged so that all concerned can have adequate notice and can prepare for the subjects to be discussed. The guidelines also take account of the fact that, even with proper notice of the agenda, the President and Deputy President may not always be able to reply to questions of detail concerning affairs in a particular department or entity (outside of the Presidency). For this reason, the guidelines state that the *"President or Deputy President may, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Committee, defer a matter for discussion. In this event, the Chairperson must make a ruling as to the timeframe in which the President or Deputy President should address the Committee in writing."* Again, the application of these provisions will evolve. Second, the guidelines anticipate that the time given to members to pose questions to the President or Deputy President during a meeting would likely have to be regulated. This point arose, in part, from Assembly Rule 185 which states that: "*A member who is not a member of a committee or subcommittee may be present at a meeting of the committee or subcommittee."* These members may "*speak on a matter before the committee or subcommittee subject to any reasonable restrictions the chairperson may impose…."* Given the political interest in meeting with the President, the absence of a limit on speaking time could lead to an unreasonable number of discursive-style questions and statements.[39] The guidelines accordingly suggest that "*The Chairperson may, subject to the principle of proportionality, impose limitations on the time used by political parties to pose questions to the President and Deputy President.*"

Concluding Remarks

The South African Parliament has undertaken meaningful reforms to reinforce its ability to oversee and hold the Executive to account. This has involved, among others, statutory powers to call upon Government office-bearers and witnesses to give evidence as well as legal authority to amend budget proposals. The rules have also undergone extensive revisions to enable parliamentarians to pursue matters of public interest with those in authority. Notwithstanding the efficacy of prevailing procedure, the National Assembly has affirmed that articles of procedure should be the subject of constant review to ensure that the Legislature can

[39] Notwithstanding Rule 185, the practice of limiting time has, in fact, already found application in various committees and inquiries.

respond to changing political and societal circumstances.[40] In this context, the Committee on the Presidency must be understood as a novel and important development in Parliament's endeavours to foster accountability.

The Committee on the Presidency was convened for the first time earlier this year and its composition includes senior and experienced members of Parliament, such as the leader of a political party, chief whips of different parties and chairpersons of committees. One of its initial tasks will be to examine the budget for Vote 1 for the forthcoming year. Concurrently, the Committee can begin liaisons with the offices of the President and Deputy President, with a view to calling upon these office-bearers at the opportune moment in the parliamentary calendar. Given that this is a new committee with distinct functions, it is certain that questions of procedure will arise; and the resolution thereof will serve to consolidate best practices going forward both for the Seventh Parliament and for the future.

Ms Sarah Davies, UK, noted with interest the differing responsibilities this committee has across the administration space and with regards to political relationships. She noted MPs on the committee are senior within the institution. She asked whether there were any other pre-existing committees and how this new committee, with its power and membership, fits into the structure. Was there any resistance from other committees following the creation of the new one?

Mr Jean Philipp Brochu, Canada, asked how the committee was created, he noted the first meetings have just happened and asked how the Executive has collaborated with the committee regarding proper scrutiny?

Mr Xolile George, South Africa, said a lot of work has yet to happen, it is a new committee and it is going to be a fairly unique committee with attendant complexities. However, there was a lot of enthusiasm and curiosity from Members. It is setup by 7 of the 18 political parties.

In response to the UK, he said there are 10 select committees in the National Council of Provinces and 34 in the National Assembly, all of which are portfolio

[40] The Rules Committee has repeatedly articulated this point. As a recent example, the Rules Committee, in its report emanating from its study into how other parliaments exercised oversight over the Head of the Executive, highlighted that: *"while the South African Parliament already has comprehensive procedures to facilitate oversight and accountability, there remain features of the rules and practices that could be enriched, the National Assembly should remain proactive and open to reforms to support its systems and practices."*

based. He said there were workshops, after the committee was voted, to set out how it will approach its work. Due to consultation, it has been welcomed as a novel attempt.

6. Communication: Mr John Njoroge Mutega, East African Legislative Assembly, on 'Public participation and parliamentary oversight'

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Public Participation

According to the United Nations (2005), public participation is the involvement of individuals in decisions that affect their lives. The UN recognizes public participation as both a democratic imperative and a fundamental human right. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirms every person's right to take part in the governance of their country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) underscores this right, particularly in Articles 20 and 27, which affirm citizens' entitlement to participate in public affairs. Article 13(1) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) affirms the right of citizens to participate in governance and influence public policymaking, including in the formulation of laws, programs, budgets, and policies.

Public participation is broadly defined as the process through which individuals, groups, and organizations engage in decision-making on public matters that have either direct or indirect implication for them (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2001).

The International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP) (2021) asserts that, public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. IAPP further holds the view that public participation will influence the decision; promote sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers. Accordingly, there has been increasing awareness of its importance in governance, and a growing number of nations have institutionalized participatory practices through legislation, policies, and guidelines (Sharma, 2008).

Public participation is also widely recognized as a fundamental component of democratic systems. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2015) characterizes it as the bedrock of democracy, emphasizing its foundational role in legitimizing and sustaining democratic institutions. In some jurisdictions, such as the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, public participation and access to information have been codified in law since before the Middle Ages (Maarten, 2021) The UN, UDHR, ICCPR, ACHPR and IAPP accentuate public participation as a right as well as fundamental in the realization of democracy.

Similarly, Fung (2006) argues that public participation is intrinsically linked to democratic governance, highlighting its function in enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. Together, these perspectives underscore the integral relationship between public participation and the democratic process, suggesting that meaningful civic involvement is both a prerequisite for and an indicator of a functioning democracy. Notably, public participation can be initiated either by members of the public or by government authorities. At its core and very important, public participation entails integrating the views and inputs of all stakeholders into governance processes (Creighton, 2005). As such, it facilitates stakeholder involvement in shaping social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental decisions that influence their well-being and life experiences.

1.1.2 Parliamentary Oversight

Globally, parliaments have three major functions namely: law making, oversight and representation. For the purpose of this paper, the author shall focus on parliamentary oversight. Yamamoto (2007), avers that parliamentary oversight is the function by which a parliament holds the government accountable on behalf of the people. This involves parliament reviewing, monitoring, and supervising government activities to ensure they are efficient, effective, and in line with the public's needs.

Despite the existence of robust constitutional and statutory obligations, legal and policy frameworks, as well as the Rules of Procedures that require respective legislatures to undertake public participation in their oversight functions, the practice remains weak and inconsistent. This gap has been evidenced by the growing number of petitions filed in courts, public demonstrations and picketing against parliamentary oversight raising critical concerns.

Policy and academic questions therefore rise as to the level of disconnect between the legal guarantees of public participation and its actual implementation oversight. This paper intends not just to share experience of parliamentary oversight but also to address this lacuna by systematically analyzing the extent, quality, and efficacy of public participation in parliamentary oversight. It is anticipated that the insights

generated will not only augment the existing body of academic literature but also provide a critical policy assessment on the 4 effectiveness of constitutional mandates in shaping inclusive parliamentary oversight practices. The policy justification is rooted in the persistent disjuncture between the constitutional and statutory provisions on public participation and their practical implementation in the parliamentary oversight.

1.2 Public Participation in Parliamentary Oversight Function in Selected Countries (US, Canada, UK, and Kenya)

Globally, parliaments are responsible for holding the executive to account. This is realized through the parliamentary oversight function that ensures that government policies and actions are both efficient, comply with the relevant laws and commensurate with the needs of the public. Parliamentary oversight, therefore, is crucial in checking excesses on the part of the executive arm of government. Yamamoto (2007) asserts that parliamentary oversight extends to every field of governance. He expounds that governance can only stand to gain from the growing prominence and scope of parliamentary oversight.

Oversight models differ from one parliamentary jurisdiction to another. Garvey et. al, (2024) in their Journal Congressional Research Services allude that, in the US, the Congress engages in oversight of the executive branch through the review, monitoring and supervision of the implementation of public policy. The Congress undertakes these oversight techniques through special investigations, reporting requirements and the use of the appropriations process to review executive authority (Garvey, et. al., 2024). According to the authors, congressional oversight ranges from formal committee hearings to informal Member or staff contact with executive officials; from staff studies to support-agency reviews; and from casework conducted by Member offices to studies prepared by non-congressional entities such as commissions and inspectors general. The US Congress takes advantage of mechanisms like the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA, 1966) to have unfettered oversight. However, studies show low engagement rates (around 20-30% in local budgeting) due to polarization and resource disparities (Barnes et al., 2004).

In Canada on the other hand, the oversight model integrates multicultural participation through oversight bodies like the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA, 2019), emphasizing transparency in intelligence and budgeting, with public consultations yielding higher 5 trust levels (70-80%) than Kenya's 40-50% (International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG), 2017).

The United Kingdom's Joint Committee on Human Rights and devolved assemblies (e.g., Scotland) promotes inclusive oversight, but post-Brexit studies

note gaps in citizen influence, similar to Kenya's elite dominance (Boughey, 2017). These comparisons underscore Kenya's progress in constitutional mandates but highlight needs for stronger enforcement. Jäntti et al. (2023) link robust participation in these countries to lower corruption perceptions, a metric where Kenya lags (Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score 32/100 in 2023). Comparatively, in the Australian House of Representatives, parliamentary oversight is exercised through committees (Howard & Kreiss, 2009). According to Hendriks and Kay (2019), the Australian legislature has undergone a 'participatory makeover' and hosts open days and communicating the latest parliamentary updates via websites and social media.

The National Assembly of Kenya exercises oversight through a number of avenues such as approving appointments, processing removal from office of the President, the Deputy President and other State officers, oversight over national revenue and its expenditure, and oversight of State organs, among other actions. For instance, Articles 201, 221, and 232 of the Constitution of Kenya empowers the National Assembly to undertake budget oversight while considering the national budget. The public are accorded an opportunity to make submissions or attend public hearings to give their views on financial matters. With regard to approval of appointment of state officers, the Kenyan public can participate in the process by expressing their views on suitability or otherwise of public officers and provide grounds for their removal by petitioning Parliament.

1.3 Public Participation in Parliamentary Oversight at the East African Legislative Assembly

The institutional framework of the East African Community (EAC) is based on the principle of separation of powers, with the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) as the Legislative arm of the Community along various of Organs of the Community forming the Executive branch and the East African Court of Justice, the judiciary arm of the Community. Under this set up, all regional policies, programmes and projects are implemented at Partner States level by the relevant Cabinet members or government agencies. As a result of this set up, parliamentary oversight is 6 exercised both at national level, by the National Parliaments, and, at the regional level, by the EALA. The role of both the parliaments in overseeing the implementation of EAC policies, programmes and projects is critical to achieving the objectives of the EAC integration.

In the case of the East African Legislative Assembly, oversight is exercised through interrogating regional policies, projects and programmes and public funds earmarked to pursue them to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in their implementation and administration. The Assembly carries out this duty mainly through the respective committees of EALA.

The oversight tools include:
a) budgetary oversight which EALA discharges to provide direction on the EAC spending and allocation of resources, as per Article 132 (5) of the Treaty which provides that: “the resources of the Community shall be utilized to finance the activities of the Community as shall be determined by the Assembly on the recommendation of the Council.” This mandate provides an important opportunity to EALA to debate the budget and allocate resources in line with the priorities of the Community. Budgetary oversight entails approval of the annual budget of the Community as well as any supplementary budget proposed after the appropriation phase.

b) on-spot assessment of the status of implementation of regional policies, laws, projects and programmes in the Partner States. On-spot assessment activities are undertaken by the various Committees of the Assembly

c) regular progress reports and calls for action (Resolutions) in relation to the implementation of the various programmes and projects provided by the Council on the basis Article 59 (3)(b) of the Treaty which provides that: the Assembly may by a majority of votes cast request the Council to submit any appropriate proposals on matters on which it considers that action is required on the part of the Community for the purpose of implementing this Treaty.

d) Questions (priority questions and non-priority questions) to Council seeking for information or pressing for action.

e) annual report on the progress made by the Council in the development of its common foreign and security policies (Article 59 (3) (c) of the Treaty.

f) Annual reports on the activities of the Community submitted by the Council as per Article 59 (3) (a) of the Treaty 7

g) Debate on the report of the Audit Commission on the Accounts of the Community (for all Organs and Institutions of the Community) as mandated by Article 134 (3) of the Treaty.

With regard to public participation, the EAC policy and legal framework recognizes the important of public involvement in the regional integration agenda, including in the execution of the parliamentary oversight function. The Moto of the Community (One People, One Destiny) sets the tone and underscores that the integration process is for the people of East Africa. This is also buttressed by the principle of people-centred regional integration, laid down in Article 7 (1) (a) of the Treaty for the establishment of the EAC. Public participation is further

underscored under Article 65 of the Treaty which mandates the Community to ensure “popular participation in the achievement of the objectives of EAC integration” by taking into account the “the opinion of the general public as expressed through the debates of elected members” at national and regional levels.

> Article 65: “ In pursuance of the policy of the Community of popular participation in the achievement of its objectives and so that the Council may be able to take into account in the exercise of its functions, the opinion of the general public in the Partner States on matters relating to the achievement of the objectives of the Community as expressed through the debates of the elected members of their National Assemblies, and those of the Assembly and to foster co operation between the Assembly and the National Assemblies of the Partner State.”

The above-mentioned enabling framework for public participation is not self-executing. The Assembly upholds the principle of people centered integration and appreciates its critical role as the main democratic link between the Organs and Institutions of the Community and the people of East Africa. The Assembly has therefore established two-way communication where it reaches out to the people in rural and urban areas when carrying out its oversight function, notably during on-spot assessment, stakeholders’ consultations and public hearings. Citizens have also access to the Assembly through petitions that it considers and provides feedback on.

1.4 Legal, Regulatory and Procedural Enhancements or Impediments to Effective Public Participation

Available literature indicates indicate that the following legal, procedural or regulatory impediments may hamper or enhance public participation in exercising oversight:

a) Legal, institutional, procedural and regulatory constraints that limit the effectiveness of citizen engagement. For instance, in Canada, despite sound constitution provisions emphasizing participatory democracy which are further reflected in various provincial legislation (Bish & Pincott, 2019), the developed country, there are allegations of institutional biases and power disparities that hinder the meaningful inclusion of all citizens (Bish & Pincott, 2019).

b) Advancements in technology - the rise of social media as a tool for citizens to voice their opinions demonstrates potential for transformative civic involvement (Odhiambo, 2022). With the advancement of technology, social media provides new avenues for the government to be held accountable and to be responsive to the electorate (Vob & Amelung, 2016).

c) Budget

d) Leadership style- an autocratic leadership may not embrace citizens' engagements while a democratic leadership may na no issues with an opened democratic space - increased civil society engagement present avenues for enhancing participation.

1.5 Innovative Ways of Enhancing Public Participation in Parliamentary Oversight

1.5.1 Digital Solutions

a) Open data portals for procurement and public spending.

b) E-governance and service delivery tracking systems.

c) Digital complaints and whistleblower platforms.

d) ICT tools for monitoring and digital transparency.

e) Technology for real-time monitoring and audits 9

f) Online petitions

g) Cybersecurity measures for data protection.

1.5.2 Critical stakeholders' engagement
a) Improved coordination between parliament, media and civil society.
b) Engaging citizens in budget planning and monitoring.
c) Promote media freedom and investigative journalism.
d) Ensure broad access to public information.

1.6 Recommendations for Effective Public Participation in Parliamentary Oversight .

a) Adequate notification to the public on upcoming inquiry
b) Record of participants to a public participation exercise
c) Feedback mechanism
d) Capturing of Views as shared indicating reasons for their incorporation or otherwise in the parliamentary Report

1.7 Conclusion

Public participation is three pronged: as a right, realization of democracy and as a platform for feedback. It buttresses and compliments parliamentary oversight by permitting citizens to keep track of governmental actions. The significance of public participation in parliamentary oversight cannot be overstated; it gives impetus to public participation by holding the government's feet to the fire and ensuring that the inputs of citizens are not just a mere cosmetic exercise but a key pillar in whatever the government does.

Mr Masibulele Xaso, South Africa, asked two questions. Firstly, as a regional body the solutions proposed must be implemented by national parliaments. To what extent do national parliaments take your ideas into account? Secondly, regarding petitions, are they utilised at the national level? Finally, do you propose standards to your member states concerning public participation, as well as guidelines that can be adapted by each member state?

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, commented on public participation in decision-making and parliamentary oversight. He said we have parliaments that are open to citizens—whether in response to public demand (in many countries, uprisings drove this openness) or out of a commitment to transparency. However, this is a double-edged sword, while the parliament opens its doors and listens to grievances, if the responses provided fail to satisfy the public, citizen distrust may actually increase. Is there a procedure in place to address citizens' concerns?

Mr John Njoroge Mutega, East African Legislative Assembly said his is an intergovernmental body with its own rules of procedure and frameworks for public participation. In Kenya, public participation is enshrined in the Constitution, proposed solutions can be implemented within our regional assembly.
He confirmed they have developed recommendations regarding public participation and have a procedure in place for the scrutiny of bills and a rationale for the public recommendations incorporated. A public report is released to ensure that all viewpoints are acknowledged.

Regarding open parliaments, he said his presentation focused on public participation in parliamentary work rather than on representation. He concentrated on how the public has been integrated into procedures. The issue of openness to the public is, in his view, a slightly different matter. It raises the question of whether they have access to information. The challenges we face relate to budget and technology. Depending on the region, technology is not sufficiently advanced to make this possible.

7. 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 16.25

FIFTH SITTING

Sunday 19 April 2026 (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. Presentation on recent developments at the Centre for Innovations in Parliament, Mr Andy Richardson

Mr Andy Richardson updated the Association about recent developments at the Centre for Innovation in Parliament.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, noted that the Inter-Parliamentary Union offers guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence, while emphasizing that the development of AI solutions is the responsibility of parliaments themselves.

Mr Georg Kleemann, Germany, asked whether examples of specific applications already in use by parliaments could be presented, and—where applicable—what the tools were used for and where their servers were located.

Mr Andy Richardson noted that in June 2024, the IPU published case studies from various parliaments following a consultation aimed at gathering information on the use of artificial intelligence. He stated that the IPU would soon organise an event dedicated to the implementation of AI in parliaments and would publish a new study on use cases and lessons learned.

He observed that artificial intelligence is primarily used to improve procedural efficiency, particularly for drafting meeting records and producing summaries of parliamentary proceedings.

He highlighted that the main issue concerns the impact of AI on the legislative process—the core of parliamentary activity—and mentioned that consideration is being given to the advisability of using AI to draft texts.

THEME: PRESENTATION OF CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WITHIN PARLIAMENTS

3. Communication by Ms Sarah Davies, UK House of Commons

Experimentation with and governance of use of AI within the UK Parliament (and notes on updating the six-point plan for Secretaries-General on AI in Parliaments)

1. In 2023 I presented a paper at the ASGP for a six-point plan for Secretary-Generals regarding the use of AI in their Parliaments, which was subsequently updated as below.

Who is talking to who about AI in your Parliament? Is this only a "digital" discussion?

- Is there a forum in your Parliament bringing together the interested groups of parliamentary staff listed in this paper? Where are your sources of expertise on data and AI? Does it span internal and external staff? How are your Libraries and data experts involved?
- Has your Parliament produced staff guidance on use of Generative AI such as ChatGPT? If so, is it widely shared?
- Are you assessing potential Chamber-related opportunities and risks in key areas such as questions, indexing, transcribing and legislation?
- Has your Parliament made APIs available or at least have a timetable for the process of making such a decision?
- Are you confident that your scrutiny function has the expertise it needs to consider these developments effectively, and is joined up to those who are assessing the implications for front-of-house and back-office operations across your Parliament?

2. This paper sets out some of the concrete uses of AI in the UK Parliament to date, with lessons learned. It first suggests two particular areas of focus for Secretary Generals in the current climate: governance and evaluation. These suggestions came out of a series of interviews I conducted with Secretaries-General in 2025 as part of a Masters on Organisational Psychology and I'm now working as part of a policy fellowship with Imperial College London to put them into practice.

3. I'm grateful to all those I interviewed last year for their assistance in this work, as I am to colleagues who have kindly sent through material from their parliaments either directly or via Luke Hussey, Director of Digital Value in PDS.

4. All these projects are partnerships. They involve colleagues from Parliamentary Digital Service (PDS) working with the subject matter experts, or users, under time pressure, limited resources and complex operational delivery challenges. We are all striving to make more efficient use of public money, ensure that business as usual (particularly Chamber business) proceeds smoothly and respond to new and additional demands on our services.

5. The relationships that operational staff build with digital staff and contractors are critical for the success of any project – even more so for an AI-based project because of the ongoing hype/technical complexity/bias/ambiguity which can surround them.

6. A mutually agreed, simple evaluation plan is essential for maintaining these partnerships under pressure and avoiding different narratives being told about the same project which seems to me to be a considerable but avoidable risk.

Governance

7. Achieving clarity is key – what is the pipeline for AI-related projects, and how does this fit into existing business case and/or digital prioritisation structures?

8. At the moment, there is a risk in the UK Parliament that we have four concurrent pipelines:
• AI projects in particular
• digitisation measures forming part of the House of Commons Savings and Improvements Programme (some of which could be AI-related)
• projects coming through our seven digital value streams
• through citizen development, which can be a limited resource depending on the extent to which it requires testing support/cyber advice from PDS.

9. Integrating this through the existing governance mechanisms - value stream oversight boards, the AI strategy group, the Information and Digital Board – with Member input via the Commons Speaker's Steering Group on AI in Parliaments and the various domestic committees – is a considerable leap of synthesis.

Evaluation
10. A way to unlock this knotty problem is to step up and simplify how we evaluate this work. There seems to be a view in many parliaments and indeed many institutions and companies that we need to get better at how we evaluate these projects. Projects can be technically evaluated (search accuracy, for example) and there are great examples of this. Work is done with users about their needs and journeys as part of our agreed processes. But I am struck by how regularly the outputs of these projects have different values attached to them at the end by the

different groups involved and how the same project is described through multiple narratives.

11. The risk of this if not addressed and brought into the open is that first there is a breakdown of relationships between users and digital teams and secondly that lessons are not learned across different projects.

12. This is the reason that I've drafted an evaluation plan in terms of questions to be considered by the different groups involved in a project (so in the UK Parliament case, this would be the relevant PDS team, users of the new technology and someone from the relevant part of the business with management/leadership responsibilities).

13. We're trialling a mechanism like this, in each value stream, to see whether in practice it achieves shared understanding across technical and non-technical teams, clearly articulates the problem, surface misunderstandings early, reduces optimism bias and underlines the importance of ongoing evaluation. It will also be used to conduct a retrospective of several projects with have been or are near competition.

14. This also clearly needs to be put into the context both of Parliament's Information and Digital Strategy and wider Government work. The UK Parliament's new Information and Digital Strategy for 2026-30 emphasises the need to be using the right tools to support modern working practices: effective evaluation of emerging technologies such as AI is crucial to that goal.

15. The UK Government's new Digital and Data Benefits Framework (published 7 April 2026) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-and-data-benefits framework/digital-and-data-benefits-framework proposes a clear approach for articulating and assessing the benefits of AI investments, moving beyond assumed efficiencies to evidence productivity gains, service quality improvements and risk reduction. It deliberately sets out to align with other public sector evaluation frameworks and guidance, and for the UK Parliament, applying this framework could strengthen scrutiny and governance by clarifying the expected value of AI-enabled activities, challenging optimism bias, and supporting more informed choices at the design and delivery stages. This approach would help ensure AI is adopted where it genuinely adds value and where outcomes can be evaluated transparently over time.

Evaluation plan

- Staff from PDS, potential users and a leader from within the Team concerned meet to discuss and agree:
  1 What is the problem we are trying to solve?

2 Do we really need a digital or AI solution or can we change the process?
3 How much time have the staff team got to explain what they do and work with PDS/contractors? When will the team be busy or away (eg recess) and have to disengage? How can that be built into the workflows?
4 Who will lead the project from (a) PDS and (b) the team? Do we all know who is involved and what their roles and responsibilities are? What will the escalation routes be?
5 How long is it likely to take, what are the key stages and how could it get blown off track? What is the range of time it might take and what would the implications be of the longest possible time taken?
6 At what points do we lock things in and when can we change track? What are the different ways this project might end?
7 What will we say to everyone about what this project is about and how much it will cost? (this is the part to bring in technical assessments and also finalise what we think the likely benefits will be)
8 Where are our potential areas of disagreement or misunderstanding and how can we reduce the risk of this derailing the project? What is the Plan B?

Concrete uses in the UK Parliament

16. The second part of this paper sets out some of the work done so far in the UK Parliament on use cases, particularly on semantic search, automatic speech recognition, summarising/drafting and copilot.

Semantic search – definite opportunities, mixed results

17. Table Office question editing and semantic search: a pilot was conducted with the House of Commons Table Office which is currently experiencing very high numbers of written questions (over the last 6 months, up to over 500 a day against a historical average of around 300).

18. This took several months of developer work, initially to see whether an automatic editing tool could be imported into existing electronic systems. The work done created a new form of semantic search which has made it much easier to spot duplicate questions, saving some staff time but readouts of precisely how much vary. Less progress was made on the editing tool and in the end the team decided to reduce the number of rules applying as an emergency mechanism, rather than proceeding with use of the editing tool.

19. A recent project on e-petitions conducted by a third party made good progress in some areas such as website accessibility but less on semantic search – we are

learning lessons from this in terms of how work done in-house and the IP involved can be shared with external partners.

20. Work has taken place with Hansard on the use of semantic search to power Hansard search, enabling users to more quickly and
effectively find relevant information, compared to the existing keyword search. The completion of historic Hansard will be publicised after Easter and is an example of citizen development; semantic search has tremendous potential.

21. A proof of concept with PDS and Faculty (AI partner) was completed in December 2025 which looked at how Parliament's data can be used and accessed more easily and leveraged to enable smart search, for example with advanced Hansard search capability. This was demonstrated by creating tools that expose or search Parliamentary data, using a standardised Model Context Protocol (MCP) framework.

22. Next steps for this work are being agreed - this approach provides a template for exposing and connecting more tools and data, and background work on a target architecture needs to run alongside it. There will also be work done to explore adopting this pattern for improving access to all public Parliamentary data, for example for search. Parliament. User acceptance testing for the similar search AI feature is currently in progress by Commons Table Office users and the feature is due to be released to the Electronic Questions and Motions backend admin application before summer 2026.

Automatic Speech Recognition: has been trialled in various forms for years by Hansard, links to potential savings in subtitling, more to come

23. Commons Hansard and broadcasting are planning to use Automatic Speech Recognition instead of re-speaking for BSL subtitling in the Chambers and reinvesting the significant contract savings in subtitling for Select Committees.

24. Work has also taken place with Hansard teams in both Houses to support the use of AI in transcribing proceedings into a format which reflects House style and is available to edit more readily. This will be trialled this autumn concentrating on Select Committee transcripts in the first instance, introducing light-touch intelligent editing. At the same time, we will be testing the market for AI solutions with the re tendering of the transcription services contract (around two thirds of Select Committee sittings) over the summer.

25. We are not aware that another Parliament has achieved savings (as opposed to expansion of services, eg Bundestag) through ASR transcription though keep a watching brief – and welcome feedback and experience from other Parliaments.

We want to build elements of interoperability into our redeveloped Hansard Reporting System (HRS) but the technical work on this, particularly on production, is at a very early stage.

Summarising/drafting: ongoing trials, practical guidance being issued and iterated

26. Consultation and evaluation: There is ongoing work to explore the best way to identify and take forward an AI tool for the Select Committee use case. There are also trials underway in the Lords Committee Office to support the summarising of evidence using AI. Work has also taken place to use AI to support the summarisation of written evidence received by House of Lords select committee to their inquiries. This has been developed as a proof of concept by colleagues in the Lords, and has demonstrated the potential of the technology to support teams to manage and analyse the responses received.

27. Next steps include a period of testing with committees, as well considering how to convert this local innovation into a resilient tool which can be used across both Houses – and see whether it can be scaled up and appeal to a range of users.

28. Guidance has been now issued to all staff groups about the risks and opportunities of using Gen AI and other tools for these purposes, including information risks, alongside access to training. Teams like Research and Information (also known as the House of Commons Library) have produce specific guidance for their researchers eg on prompts and are testing new forms of semantic search and ways to assist production of papers and research without introducing bias or errors.

Copilot: relatively expensive and not the answer to everything but promising results in some areas

29. While the full version of Copilot has been trialled, problems have surfaced at a late stage with potential access to material because of how the tool uses document sharing links. Full rollout has been paused while further checks are made on historic permissions to ensure that eg parliamentary privileged information will not be surfaced. C

30. The period of extended piloting and preparation will need to be used to enable better information management hygiene to be in place and for teams be clear about whether they want to use it and how to get value from it. Further decisions on this are expected later this year.

31. PDS are investigating with Microsoft a ‘political content blocker’ issue in M365 Copilot and Copilot Chat. When inbuilt safety filters in Copilot detect

content which could plausibly be political advocacy or election influence, it blocks or deflects the request to reduce the risk of misinformation or unintended persuasion. This is an issue in the Parliamentary context and may impact the uptake of the tool – for example, an MP was blocked from writing a newsletter using Copilot.

32. Part of the UK Parliament's pilot of M365 Copilot has included experimenting with Copilot agents. Four pilots have taken place. The first was a SharePoint agent created to search and analyse the Research and Information SharePoint site. The intent was to speed up discovery and synthesis of research material. There were promising results with minimal set up.

33. The second was a HR agent to search and query the House of Commons and Joint Department Staff Handbook. The goal was to support the PACT team in responding to initial staff questions more efficiently. Outputs were human validated to reduce misinformation risk. It worked and again, was relatively straightforward to use.

34. The third was a bespoke inbox management agent built for an MP. It aimed to categorise incoming emails (casework, policy/campaign, other), automatically forward casework emails to a caseworker, and draft template responses for campaign/policy emails. The agent was not deployed live due to cost and complexity in Copilot Studio. The functionality is now being rebuilt in using Microsoft's PowerAutomate tool (at a fraction of the monthly cost of using Copilot Studio).

35. The fourth was an agent developed for the Contact Centre to help new call handlers efficiently retrieve the information they needed to respond to queries in real time. Initial attempts to use Copilot out of the box faltered (it started to inexplicably provide responses in French), but an agent has demonstrated more value.

36. Aside from the inbox management agent, all are desired to go into production. There is an outstanding question about token costs: unlike normal Copilot, there is a charge per query (£0.01p a prompt). In an agentic setting, these can add up very quickly so affordability needs to be assessed.

37. From April 2026, the UK Parliament's next stage for testing the full potential of Microsoft's Copilot tooling is one of "early adoption". This will see a campaign across teams to improve information management processes to address the emerging risks identified, as well as further explore the implications of using agentic AI in a live service setting. The intent is by April 2027 to have 1000 active

M365 Copilot users. Clear evaluation criteria are being agreed, with a focus on both value for money and team productivity.

Mr Ahmet Bozkurt, Turkey, spoke as follows:

I would like to once again express our great pleasure in hosting the Meeting of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, held within the framework of the 152nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and to state that it is an honor for us to welcome you to our country and to the magnificent city of Istanbul. I believe that our meetings have taken place in an extremely efficient and productive environment. As a concrete example of this positive atmosphere of cooperation, I would like to briefly introduce to you today the artificial intelligence-supported Minutes Information System being used in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye.

The Minutes Information System is a modern and domestic digital infrastructure that enables the automatic transcription of speeches delivered in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. Developed through the cooperation of the GNAT and TÜBİTAK BİLGEM, this project aims to make the processes of recording minutes faster and more efficient.

In my presentation, I will first provide general information about the system. Then, I will summarize the benefits it provides, its technical structure, and its operational process. Finally, I will conclude my remarks with a general evaluation by addressing the challenges encountered and proposed solutions.
The Minutes Information System is a system that digitalizes the process of recording and transcribing all speeches delivered in the General Assembly and commissions of the GNAT. This system is carried out within the GNAT and has been developed entirely with domestic resources. This provides a significant advantage in terms of data security, sustainability, and cost. The aim of the system is to minimize manual processes, conduct operations in a digital environment, and accelerate the preparation of minutes.

Recording legislative activities is a constitutional duty according to Article 97 of our Constitution. Accordingly, all proceedings of the General Assembly and commissions of the GNAT are recorded by stenographers under the Presidency of Minutes Services. Within the scope of this duty, all General Assembly proceedings from the establishment of the GNAT to the present day have been recorded.
The main purpose of the system is to securely record speeches and automatically convert them into text using artificial intelligence technologies. At the same time, speakers are identified through biometric voice analysis, and all processes are

managed via a single platform. In this way, both operational convenience is ensured and data integrity is preserved.

One of the most important benefits of this system is increased efficiency. With the digitalization of processes, time loss is reduced and operations are accelerated. Thanks to real-time access, stenographers can instantly access the texts generated by the system. In addition, with the introduction of the system, 113.000 pages of paper have been saved, and this reduction in paper usage has also made a significant contribution to environmental sustainability.

Security is one of the most critical elements of the system. The Minutes Information System operates in a closed circuit, meaning it functions without an internet connection, which provides strong protection against external threats. Furthermore, the fact that the system's source codes are held within our institution and are regularly updated makes it more resilient against cyber threats.
The system consists of various modules that perform different functions. I would like to briefly explain these modules: while task planning is carried out through the stenographer module, the speaker recognition module identifies the speaker through voice analysis, and the speech recognition module automatically converts spoken content into text. However, human oversight continues throughout this process, with stenographers making final edits to ensure the complete accuracy of the text.

The system has been actively used in General Assembly and commission meetings since 1 October 2024. In this context, between 1 October 2024 and 13 April 2026, 194 sittings were held in the General Assembly of the GNAT, with a total of 1,473 hours and 7 minutes of work carried out. During this period, more than 51 thousand pages of minutes were produced, and all proceedings were recorded in detail. In the same period, 389 commission meetings were held, with a recorded working time of 1,637 hours and 49 minutes. Within the scope of commission activities, more than 56 thousand pages of minutes were also prepared and recorded. It should be particularly emphasized that these data were obtained after the implementation of the Minutes Information System. These data demonstrate that the system, which has been in use for approximately two years, is a proven system that enables parliamentary activities to be carried out in a technology-oriented, efficient, and rapid manner.

Although the system automatically recognizes and transcribes speeches, it also entails certain challenges. Situations such as multiple individuals speaking simultaneously or intervening with the speaker, different accents, rapid speech, and technical terminology may affect accuracy. To address these issues, advanced audio processing technologies, noise reduction systems, and continuously trained artificial intelligence models should be employed. In addition, the integration of

institution-specific dictionaries ensures more accurate recognition of technical terms. Our work in this direction is ongoing.

In conclusion, the Minutes Information System represents a significant step in the digital transformation of parliamentary processes. Through this system, a faster, more efficient, and more secure process of producing minutes has been made possible. With the advancement of artificial intelligence technologies, it is expected that the system will become even more effective and robust in the future.

Ms Silke Albin, Germany, asked how the staff invested in the AI lab, how many staff are working there?

Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada, asked about security of information and reflected that this has hampered his parliament in adopting AI?

Ms Anabela CABRAL FERREIRA, Portugal, asked how the UK is ensuring it maintains its digital sovereignty as it develops AI capability.

H.E Ms Kareema Alabbasi, Bahrain, asked whether the UK was developing its use of AI using internal teams or whether it buys-in digital services from private companies. If buying external services, how is the service evaluated to ensure its value for money?

Ms Sarah Davies, UK, first thanked her colleague from Turkey for the excellent hospitality. She said it was fascinating to hear about the minute information system. In particular, the use made of the technology in committee as a test environment before moving to the plenary. She noted that speech recognition is improving dramatically, it is getting better at learning how to transcribe different accents and to block background noise. To Germany, she said there is a hub of 3 or 4 people in the AI lab. She noted the UK digital department is very large, around 300 people across both Houses, so it is not a huge development but rather a centre of expertise.

In response to Canda, on security of information, she said the UK is also grappling with this issue. Guidance for MPs, MPs staff and parliamentary staff has been a big feature of recent times. In particular, warning all these groups not to put personal, parliamentary or constituent information into ChatGPT.
Reflecting on using Co-Pilot to search internally within Microsoft Office, she said the way information has been shared and the way permissions have been setup on documents, folders and inboxes has complicated the roll-out of Co-Pilot. She noted the UK is trying to ensure that privileged information cannot be accidentally accessed by Co-Pilot due to imprecise permissions on legacy technology. She said with privileged information the House of Commons is taking a zero-risk approach

to improper access. She said that information owners are working with the digital team to ensure the safe use of the AI tools.

In response to Portugal on digital sovereignty, she said the UK decided quite early to be on the cloud and to use Microsoft Office. She said the UK is keen not to be too reliant on Microsoft but the decision to join the cloud at an early stage has been helpful.

To Bahrain, she said they also work with third parties, contractors, specialist digital suppliers but there are stringent procurement controls. She noted evaluation mechanisms are even more important when using third party suppliers, however there is risk that lessons learnt are not shared with external providers in the same way as for internal projects. With regards to AI capability amongst staff, she said there is training provided and in particular, a training scheme for senior leadership on digital transformation which her colleagues have found very valuable.

4. Communication by Mr Kalipha MM Mbye, National Assembly of The Gambia

Mr. President,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Secretaries-General present,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a profound honour to address this distinguished body in the historic city of Istanbul, a city that for centuries has served as a bridge between continents, cultures, and civilizations.

In many ways, the role of Secretaries-General mirrors that same function. We serve as institutional bridges, linking the complex procedural machinery of legislation with the lived realities and aspirations of the citizens our parliaments represent.

It is therefore with deep appreciation that I share with you the recent experience of the National Assembly of The Gambia, perhaps one of the smallest parliaments represented in this forum, yet one that is undertaking significant institutional reforms aimed at strengthening parliamentary openness, innovation, and citizen engagement.

Following The Gambia's democratic transition in 2017, the National Assembly Service embarked on a deliberate process of institutional renewal. This renewal required moving beyond traditional methods of conducting parliamentary business

and embracing innovation as a tool for strengthening efficiency, transparency, and public participation.

Our objective has been twofold: to modernise parliamentary administration and to bring Parliament closer to the citizens it serves. Innovation, in our context, has therefore not been pursued for technological prestige, but as a practical instrument for democratic deepening.

Today, the National Assembly has reached an advanced stage in its comprehensive digitalisation programme, a strategic initiative designed to maximise institutional performance and legislative output. This transition towards a more sophisticated, technology-driven environment represents a decisive departure from legacy manual systems, replacing antiquated administrative procedures with a modern digital ecosystem.

This modernisation is fundamentally enhancing the Assembly's operational capacity. By integrating advanced workflow management tools and transitioning toward a paperless architecture, the Assembly Service is increasingly equipped to manage a demanding and complex legislative agenda with greater speed, accuracy, and institutional efficiency.

One of the earliest and most impactful reforms involved the modernisation of the Hansard reporting system. Historically, the production of the official parliamentary record represented a major administrative bottleneck. The preparation and printing of transcripts often took several months, meaning that by the time the public record became available, parliamentary debates had already faded from the national discourse.

In 2025, the National Assembly introduced an AI-assisted transcription system to modernise this workflow. Under this new system, uncorrected transcripts are produced within 24 to 48 hours of a sitting. Journalists, researchers, and the public now have rapid access to accurate quotations and parliamentary proceedings, allowing debates to be reported with greater accuracy and contextual integrity.

This reform has significantly strengthened the credibility of parliamentary reporting. When the National Assembly appears in the news today, the narrative is increasingly anchored in the official digital record. More importantly, by digitising our parliamentary archives, we have moved legislative history from physical archives to searchable digital platforms, making it accessible to citizens across the country and within the Gambian diaspora.

While plenary debates often attract public attention, the committee stage remains the most substantive component of the legislative process. To enhance legislative

inclusivity, particularly during committee oversight work, concerted efforts are currently underway to fully institutionalise a Digital Stakeholder Submission Portal.

Traditionally, stakeholder engagement relied primarily on physical consultations, which often limited participation due to travel costs and logistical constraints. The proposed digital portal will allow stakeholders to submit memoranda electronically through an online submission platform, verified institutional email channels, and moderated digital engagement platforms.

This innovation will effectively transform the legislative process from a largely top-down consultation model into a more participatory and inclusive bottom-up engagement framework.

As I briefly indicated in my previous address to this forum, a notable institutional innovation emerged during the establishment of the Special Select Committee in May 2025, mandated to investigate the sale and disposal of assets linked to the former President Yahya Jammeh following the findings of a Commission of Inquiry.

In addressing this complex matter, the National Assembly adopted a novel approach by integrating professional legal practitioners as Lead Counsel to assist the Committee during its public hearings. Traditionally, parliamentary questioning in The Gambia had been conducted exclusively by Members of the National Assembly. While Members embody the democratic mandate of the people, complex financial and legal investigations often require specialised legal and forensic expertise.

By adopting a structure similar to that used in judicial commissions of inquiry, the Assembly significantly strengthened the technical rigour of witness examinations. This innovation effectively bridged the gap between political oversight and professional investigative scrutiny, thereby enhancing the credibility, depth, and effectiveness of parliamentary inquiries.

I am pleased to report that the Committee successfully completed its mandate and subsequently tabled its report before the Assembly. Both the proceedings of the Committee and its final report were widely acclaimed as unprecedented in both substance and form. Indeed, for the first time in the history of our Parliament, an inquiry of this nature was conducted with such depth, transparency, and procedural sophistication, successfully facilitated by the National Assembly Service.

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Dear colleagues, citizen engagement today is increasingly mediated through digital platforms. In The Gambia, internet penetration has reached a significant proportion of the population, with most users accessing the internet through mobile devices. Recognising this trend, the National Assembly has prioritised live streaming of plenary sittings and key committee hearings.

In effect, every smartphone has become a front-row seat in the Public Gallery of Parliament. This development has significantly increased public visibility of parliamentary oversight activities. When committees such as the Finance and Public Accounts Committee question government agencies regarding public expenditure or asset management, citizens can now observe these proceedings in real time.

Such visibility strengthens transparency and serves as a powerful deterrent against administrative complacency and potential misuse of public resources.

Innovation has also strengthened internal accountability mechanisms. As part of our ongoing efforts to leverage modern technology, plans are underway to implement a Digital Ministerial Response Tracker, a tool designed to enhance executive accountability.

Linked to the requirements of Order 100 of our Standing Orders which mandates that Ministers provide formal responses to committee recommendations within

specific timelines, this system will utilise a centralised dashboard managed by the Office of the Clerk. Once fully operational, the tracker will automatically flag delays and provide real-time monitoring of response data to ensure consistent follow-up.

This technological innovation seeks to entrench a culture of accountability, ensuring that parliamentary oversight moves beyond debate and results in measurable executive action.

While digital reforms offer enormous opportunities, they also raise the risk of digital exclusion, particularly in rural communities. To address this challenge, the National Assembly has adopted a hybrid communication strategy.

Digital engagement is complemented by National Assembly radio programmes, through which parliamentary proceedings and legislative developments are translated into local languages for wider public understanding. Innovation must therefore remain inclusive. Technology should expand democratic participation rather than inadvertently narrowing it.

Distinguished colleagues, as Secretaries-General we are the custodians of our parliaments' institutional memory and administrative evolution. The experience of The Gambia demonstrates that innovation in parliamentary administration does not necessarily require vast financial resources. What it requires is vision, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to transparency.

Our e-Parliament Roadmap and Legislative Reform Agenda represent our determination to build a modern, responsive, and citizen-centred Parliament.

As we reflect here in Istanbul, a city defined by its bridges, we are reminded that the greatest bridge a parliament can build is the bridge of trust between institutions and the people they serve.

Ultimately, the most transformative innovation any parliament can adopt is the innovation of openness. When we open our records, our procedures, and our deliberations to the citizens we serve, we do more than remain in the news, we remain relevant in the democratic life of our nations.

I thank you for your kind attention.

4. Communication by H.E Ms Kareema Mohamed Abdulla Alabbasi, Shura Council and H.E Mohammed Alsisi Alboainain, Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain

Your Excellency the President,
Their Excellencies Secretaries-General,
Esteemed colleagues,

Peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you,

We meet today at a pivotal moment in the history of parliamentary work, where digital transformations are no longer merely an organizational option or a limited-impact development path, but have become a fundamental element reshaping the very nature of parliamentary administration itself. Artificial intelligence is no longer just a supportive technological tool; rather, it has evolved into a knowledge system that influences how legislation is produced, information is analyzed, and institutional knowledge is managed, and even how parliament interacts with its citizens, as well as the mechanisms supporting the secretariat bodies in legislative and oversight functions.

However, the fundamental question for us as Secretaries-General is not merely: how do we use artificial intelligence? Rather, it is: how do we employ it within a solid governance framework that preserves parliamentary values, safeguards institutional independence, and enhances public trust?

Accordingly, the deployment of artificial intelligence in parliaments should be based on three core principles:

- That it supports the decision-maker, not replace them;
- That it is subject to a clear governance framework ensuring transparency and accountability;
- And that it is managed as a strategic tool to enhance quality and efficiency, not as a standalone technological project.

In this context, I would like to briefly present the experience of the Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which stemmed from an integrated institutional vision for employing artificial intelligence in the parliamentary work environment, within the framework of the Royal Vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and with the support of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

The Council of Representatives, under the support and directives of H.E. Mr. Ahmed bin Salman Al Musalam, Speaker of the Council of Representatives, obtained the certification for the Artificial Intelligence Management System, making it among the first parliaments globally to adopt this specialized international standard, as a reflection of an institutional approach grounded in the establishment of clear internal policies, the management of risks associated with the use of intelligent systems, ensuring compliance with ethical and legal frameworks, and documenting processes related to the development and operation of these technologies. This demonstrated an advanced level of institutional maturity in managing artificial intelligence as a governed system rather than a transient technological tool.

An integrated governance framework has also been developed, defining the scope of use, supervisory responsibilities, evaluation and review mechanisms, and data protection and privacy standards, ensuring the responsible and effective use of these technologies in line with international best practices.

At the operational level, smart digital solutions have been implemented to enhance the efficiency of legislative and oversight procedures and have accelerated analysis and follow-up processes, particularly in document management, legislative research, data extraction from reports, and the analysis of parliamentary work patterns, thereby enabling more accurate and timely support for committees and members.

An intelligent virtual assistant has also been launched via the Council's website, powered by artificial intelligence technologies, providing visitors with instant access to accurate information on the Council's work, its committees, legislation, and services. This has contributed to enhancing transparency, facilitating access to information, and improving the digital experience, in addition to enabling the administration to analyze patterns of public interest and continuously develop services.

Recognizing the importance of the human element, specialized training programs have been implemented to enhance the capabilities of national cadres in the fields of artificial intelligence and data analysis, ensuring that parliamentary administration possesses the expertise required to understand intelligent systems, manage them, and critically evaluate their outputs.
This has been accompanied by the application of the highest standards of cybersecurity and data protection within the adopted intelligent systems, ensuring the sustainability of digital transformation and safeguarding sensitive parliamentary information, in alignment with international standards in information security and digital risk management.

"Practical experiences are perhaps the most genuine test of the robustness of these systems. In this regard, the recent targeted attacks against the technological

infrastructure of the Kingdom of Bahrain, within the context of hostile actions linked to the Islamic Republic of Iran, accompanied by intimidation of civilians and threats to civilian objects, as well as the disruption of several electronic services, cannot be viewed as a mere technological incident. Rather, they constitute a serious violation affecting societal security and state stability, and contradict established principles of international law related to the protection of civilians and the safeguarding of vital facilities. This reflects an escalation of threat patterns that extend beyond the technological sphere to impact both humanitarian and sovereign dimensions, thereby necessitating that the security of intelligent systems, particularly artificial intelligence applications, be treated as a sovereign matter that allows no complacency, requiring strengthened protection systems, enhanced response readiness, and efforts toward establishing more stringent international rules to address these growing threats.

From this standpoint, our responsibility goes beyond merely adopting technologies to include securing them and ensuring their use within robust governance frameworks that enhance trust and preserve the continuity of parliamentary work in the face of advanced risks.

Esteemed colleagues,

Based on the Bahraini experience, I emphasize that artificial intelligence in parliaments should be managed as a comprehensive administrative transformation grounded in a strategic vision, clear governance, a supportive organizational structure, and qualified human competencies. Our responsibility as Secretaries-General is not limited to providing technological tools, but extends to fostering an institutional culture that balances innovation with discipline, speed with accuracy, and efficiency with democratic safeguards. While artificial intelligence can enhance the quality of legislative studies, accelerate procedures, and improve knowledge management, it also raises challenges related to algorithmic bias, data security, and model transparency, issues that require vigilant administrative oversight and a clear regulatory framework.

In conclusion, I believe that the next phase calls for strengthening cooperation among parliamentary secretariats to exchange expertise in the field of artificial intelligence governance, and to work toward developing shared professional standards, and perhaps to consider an international parliamentary guiding framework regulating the use of artificial intelligence in legislative and administrative work, in a manner that preserves the democratic character of parliamentary institutions in the era of digital transformation.

Thank you for your kind attention,

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

Mr Jean-Philippe Brochu, Canada, said we have talked a lot about the use of AI for legislative functions but he wanted to go back to the first part of the presentation on using AI to minimise human errors in administrative functions. He said there is a use for these tools in support of these administrative services. He asked how they integrated Co-Pilot into administrative systems?

Mr Mohamed Drissi DADA, Algeria, noted the parliament in Bahrain has made important steps in implementing AI applications and asked what are the future plans of the parliament of Bahrain on the use of Ai?

Mrs Loveness MAYAKA, Zambia, said the Zambia was also interested in adopting AI and asked the presenters to elaborate a bit more on the governance framework for the adoption of AI.

Ms Kareema Alabbasi, Bahrain, responded regarding the use of Co-Pilot. She said it is mostly used for administrative support and it's best use is for Excel data, PowerPoints and summarising long emails into key ideas. She said financial analysis using Co-Pilot in Excel is highly effective. Also, for PowerPoint it can develop general ideas into a fully-fledged presentation quickly. To Algeria, she said they are contemplating the possibility of launching a new set of plans using AI. In particular, a new competition on digital innovation addressed to the youth of Bahrain relying mainly on AI applications. The Senate is also planning to develop a new platform, which will hold a set of programmes, one of which will assess the impact of legislation and will replace manual evaluations undertaken at present. At first, it will be assisted by humans. Another project is to convert sign language interpretation and deliver this via an automated service.

Mr Mohammad Albunain, Bahrain, said in response to Algeria, the cost aspect of the software was a consideration and in the coming years he hoped the technology would drop in price for annual subscriptions, this is the first challenge.

The second challenge is safeguarding staff and jobs and ensuring staff members have the necessary capacity to use AI and new technologies. He said that in future there will be less jobs for humans and this will lead to unemployment so we must promote human capacity to use these services.

A third challenge is cyber-attacks, he said Bahrain had received hundreds of attacks from Iran recently. They were able to counteract both cyber-attacks and missile attacks on their physical data systems. Cloud computing and use of servers

outside of Bahrain meant they were able to replace what was damaged in the missile attacks and safeguard all their data.

To Zambia, he said the governance structure is still under development. There is a law on cyber-crime and a law on electronic governance which helped them to move quickly on adopting AI. However, they are still working on more legislation to ensure further safe adoption. He concluded by saying that digital transformation is vital, Bahrain has saved a lot of money by getting rid of paper and replacing this with iPads. Previously, some documents had thousands of pages which had to be sent to all members.

5. Communication by Dr Silke Albin, German Bundestag

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this year's conference and present concrete examples of the use of artificial intelligence within parliaments. This is a topic we all recognize: the urgent need to share our practical experiences with implementing AI.

Before I walk you through our specific use cases, I would like to challenge us all to think bigger.

Beyond use cases: the real challenge
Since 2023, the German Bundestag has systematically addressed artificial intelligence, and what we've learned is that focusing solely on use cases captures only a small fraction of what we as parliaments actually face when introducing and managing AI.

What good are AI applications if they remain unused out of ignorance or fear? What value do they provide if they're applied incorrectly?

While we discuss individual use cases, entirely new organizational forms are emerging in the wider world – programmes like Anthropic's Claude or advanced coding assistants are being deeply integrated into processes. So far, isolated AI deployment has led to a subjective reduction in workload for individuals. However, objective measurability remains a problem.

It’s only when we shift from talking about "AI use case introduction" to "AI transformation" that it becomes clear that these changes must be manifested in

activities, processes, job descriptions, competencies, hierarchies, and management itself – instead of using AI blindly, we need to integrate it wisely and efficiently.

Parliaments cannot stand apart
Parliaments do not exist outside of society. They need to be right in the middle of it. And they must be able to fulfil their duties in a future in which state institutions – the legal system, the executive branch, downstream agencies all the way to the municipal level – work with complex AI systems and have adapted their processes accordingly, enabling extremely fast and efficient operations.
How can parliaments keep pace with this reality?

AI is not an IT topic
We are conscious that AI is not an IT topic but a transformation topic. Communication, project and programme management and culture take up a large portion of our focus. We are pursuing what we call an emergent strategy, with strategic foresight, a broadly positioned task force and thinking from the employee's perspective. In this strategy, we only regulate and plan in concrete terms what we already know, with pilot projects and innovation programmes providing orientation. A data-driven and evidence-based approach is essential to us.

This requires changing framework conditions. We need to address shadow AI, bridge the digital divide that generative AI creates, and develop our own employees into genuine AI experts, since we cannot simply hire these from the market.

The use cases I'm about to present are more than isolated solutions, they are the early steps of our organisational transformation journey. They show us what changes we need to make, what competencies we need to build, and what processes we need to redesign. We need to think of AI as a new layer within our digitalisation efforts.

Examples of AI use in the German Bundestag
Our approach to AI can be divided into the following four categories:

- Using AI productively: Implemented AI Applications
- Investigating new AI Use Cases: AI Programmes
- Testing AI Technologies: Pilot Projects
- Providing Assistance for AI: Tools and help for users

An example of how we use AI productively is our “Whisper” transcription tool, which has been rolled out across several parliamentary committees. Whisper's automated speech-to-text capabilities provide instant transcriptions, allowing committee members to receive minutes of meetings and hearings within a short time. The application is updated on an ongoing basis, most recently with the addition of speaker recognition and multilingual sessions. Following transcription, technical

terms, proper names, and personal names are automatically corrected using replacement lists.
As of 2025, approximately 250 users across parliament have transcribed 2,344 meeting hours – that's roughly 97 days of continuous speech.

We also use “Text2Speech” for internal podcasts: our "Reports from Brussels" podcast was previously recorded by employees in Brussels themselves using a pre-written script. Now, a text-to-speech application provides a natural sounding AI-generated voice. The application is also used to record tutorials, user manuals, and help pages for websites.

Live parliamentary broadcasts are another example: since 2021, we have been working with an external partner to deliver simultaneous transcription and German-language subtitling for the live broadcast of plenary sittings. In this workflow, an AI system transcribes the live feed, while a human supervisor monitors the output in real time. If the AI output needs correcting or refining, the supervisor can step in immediately to ensure the final subtitles are accurate and delivered on time. The number of broadcast hours has increased to around 1,000 per year.

We have also been ***investigating new AI use cases*** through our “AI Pioneers” programme, which ended in September 2025 after four months of intensive experimentation by a dedicated test group of employees who evaluated AI chatbots across various areas of Parliament.

Approximately 70 testers – drawn from 26 administrative divisions – took part, supported by weekly exchange events and a dedicated internal chat channel. We collected 136 AI use cases and identified ten major usage categories, providing insights into how AI chatbots could augment administrative work.

Our key finding was that open-source AI chatbots can already provide significant support for important parliamentary activities. Yet more importantly, this programme taught us about change management, and that giving employees hands-on experience, creating peer-to-peer exchange forums, and documenting real-world applications are far more effective than top-down implementation strategies.

Another example is the "AI in Parliament" flagship initiative that ran from mid-2023 to the end of 2024. Its objective was to explore AI applications across parliamentary functions. One of its goals was to use the resulting overview as a means of communicating the potential of AI in Parliament across disciplines and departments.

In total, around 180 AI use cases, both general and specific, could be identified in Parliament. Our approach has been featured on the IPU website:

https://www.ipu.org/innovation-tracker/story/prioritizing-ai-use-cases-german-bundestag.

Our next point is ***testing AI technologies through pilot projects***:

In cooperation with the AI Service Centre of a well-known research and education institute, we're developing SENTRA (Search Engine for Research Services Text Retrieval Assistant), an AI RAG system with a novel search interface for all reports and analyses from our Research Services— over 1,000 high-quality reports per year accessible and fully searchable by language. The prototype will be ready in April 2026 after three months of development. Educational spill-over effects and LLM-optimized document templates are valuable side-effects.

More generally, we are also experimenting with general-purpose chatbot systems. Our dedicated server system runs an internal open-source chatbot, which played a central role in the "AI Pioneers" programme. Despite being a scaled-down version of commercial chatbots, it provided transferable insights while meeting our data protection requirements. We tested two open-source models successfully. Now that we know, how and for what purpose our employees use them, we're evaluating third-party providers for suitable, high-performance Large Language Models.

Since early 2024, we've tested a semi-automated keywording system for press articles. Up to 800 new articles are added daily, and seven editors assign each article with up to eight attributes from 6,500 keywords. This pilot scheme demonstrated the tangible benefits of reducing that amount of manual effort for committee staff and increasing efficiency.

Finally, I'd like to talk about ***providing assistance for AI use***, because there are no use cases if users are not empowered to use AI in the right way:

The "AI User's Toolbox" is not an AI application, it's a dedicated set of tools designed to support the adoption and use of AI applications by Members of the Bundestag and administrative staff. The toolbox is currently being developed and will be made available on our intranet. It translates AI guidelines into concrete dos and don'ts. Users will find an internal catalogue of prompts, decision trees, application "whitelists", and access to the AI training platform.

We're finalising our AI training concept in accordance with the EU AI Act. Building on the "AI Pioneers" experiences, this will offer a modular e-learning curriculum tailored to our diverse target groups. We're also partnering with the Bertelsmann Foundation on AI competence development research.

In closing, the reality we must face is that even as we're just now implementing our first use cases, it's becoming clear that processes, working methods, and many of our structures must be changed if we want AI to do more than merely support individual work steps.

We must genuinely integrate AI quickly AND wisely if we want to utilize its technical possibilities. This means reimagining workflows from the ground up, adjusting roles and skills, and establishing red lines – clear boundaries where we cannot or will not deploy AI under certain conditions.

The organisational, technical, and personnel challenges ahead are significant, but they can be navigated if we approach them systematically. Let me make my closing message clear: we should not view specific AI use cases in isolation, and we certainly shouldn't equate use cases with AI applications. The real success is in building an organization where the right use cases emerge naturally because we've created the conditions for AI-driven transformation.

Parliaments must remain capable of fulfilling their constitutional duties in a world that is being transformed by AI. That means we cannot afford to be passive observers. We must actively shape this transformation. Let's commit to moving beyond collecting use cases, and to managing real change. Let's build organizations where AI integration becomes natural, where our staff is empowered, and where our processes are resilient and future-proof.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to our discussions.

Mr Tavernier, France asked the speaker for his views on the use of artificial intelligence by parliamentary staff. He inquired whether there were any estimates regarding the proportion of reports or amendments drafted with the help of AI. He also emphasized that legal analysis remains the core of the profession and noted a marked recent improvement in the quality of legal memoranda produced using AI. He asked whether this observation was shared by others. Finally, he inquired whether the use of AI might have implications for recruitment or even lead to job cuts.

Ms Sarah Davies, UK, raised a question regarding academic partnerships, asking whether they were more effective than those established with consulting firms. She also inquired about the existence of partnerships with the private sector.

Furthermore, she addressed the issue of human oversight of AI-generated output, citing subtitling as an example. She highlighted that this task could be stressful for

staff—particularly when the quality of the output is unsatisfactory—and asked whether this phenomenon had been observed.

In response to the French delegation, it was noted that staff fall into three groups regarding AI: approximately one-third are highly enthusiastic, one-third are interested but do not yet master the tools, and one-third are opposed, viewing these systems as risky and costly.

Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland raised the issue of "red lines" regarding AI. He expressed concern that overly strict regulation might encourage the use of private tools without oversight, leading to the clandestine development of applications.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, discussed the use of the Whisper automatic transcription program for parliamentary debates. He noted that in Uruguay, transcription is still performed by humans, who are able to capture the emotions and intentions of speakers. He questioned whether these elements might be lost with AI and raised the question of the human reviewer's role.

Dr Silke Albin, Germany stated that there are currently no particular recruitment difficulties. However, she noted that the labour market in Germany is evolving rapidly, independently of the parliamentary context. While some jobs might disappear, no layoffs are planned. Adjustments will be necessary, particularly through training staff for new roles.

Regarding partnerships, she clarified that while there is cooperation with research centres, there are no partnerships with private companies. She expressed the view that the latter lack sufficient understanding of parliamentary culture, which would make collaboration difficult.

As for the oversight of AI-generated output, she indicated that the staff responsible for transcription are generally open to these tools. Their work is shifting toward observational tasks, such as identifying emotions and intentions. However, she emphasized that human intervention remains essential, while acknowledging that AI could advance rapidly in this area.

Finally, she noted that defining "red lines" poses a challenge. A code of conduct exists, but compliance cannot be guaranteed at all times, particularly given the cybersecurity issues involved.

6. Communication by Dr Omar Abdulrahman Alnuaimi, Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence is often discussed in parliamentary settings as a set of useful tools: automatic transcription, search assistants, drafting aids, or public-facing chat interfaces. In my view, this framing is incomplete. The central question for a parliament is not whether AI can be used in one office or another, but how it can be institutionalized in a way that strengthens the quality, speed, integrity, and continuity of parliamentary work.

For the Federal National Council (FNC) of the United Arab Emirates, the appropriate entry point was therefore not the acquisition of isolated applications, but the design of an institutional architecture. This meant answering a series of administrative and constitutional questions in the correct order: What functions of parliament are most suitable for augmentation by AI? What governance model should apply? What data can be used, under what classification rules, and in which technical environment? What capabilities must Members and staff build before solutions are deployed at scale? And how can experimentation move, in a controlled way, into formal institutional adoption?

Our answer has been to treat AI as a structured institutional programme spanning governance, data, capacity building, infrastructure, and operational redesign. This communication sets out that model and illustrates it through concrete examples already identified within the FNC roadmap. It is offered not merely as a description of a national experience, but as a practical parliamentary architecture that may be of use to other chambers considering how to move from experimentation to institutional maturity.

2. Why an Institutional Architecture Approach was Necessary

Parliamentary administrations face a familiar risk when approaching emerging technologies: the rapid adoption of promising tools before the institution has defined the conditions under which those tools should be used. In a corporate environment, such fragmentation may lead mainly to duplication or cost. In a parliament, the consequences are more serious. Weak governance can affect confidentiality, procedural reliability, record integrity, and the credibility of outputs used by Members in legislative and oversight work.

The FNC therefore adopted an architecture-first approach for four reasons. First, parliamentary work is document-intensive and evidence-dependent. Legislative

review, oversight, committee work, inter-parliamentary relations, and record management all rely on large volumes of structured and unstructured information. Secondly, parliamentary information is not uniform: some material is public, some contains personal data, some is confidential, and some is highly sensitive or sovereign. Thirdly, successful AI adoption depends on institutional readiness, not only software availability. Finally, the value of AI in parliament lies in its integration into workflows, not in isolated demonstration projects.

This institutional logic was reinforced by the wider national direction of the UAE. The country's public-sector digital transformation agenda and national commitment to artificial intelligence created a favorable strategic environment for parliamentary innovation. The FNC's task was to translate that national ambition into a parliamentary model suited to legislative procedure, oversight responsibilities, and the administrative standards expected of a national legislature.

3. Institutional Launch of the FNC AI Program

The FNC's AI journey was launched under the guidance and support of the parliamentary leadership. That political and institutional sponsorship was essential. In parliamentary administrations, transformation succeeds when it is clearly linked to the strategic objectives of the institution rather than presented as an isolated technical initiative.

A decisive step was the issuance of a formal administrative decree in 2024, establishing the FNC AI Team. The purpose of that decision was not symbolic. It created the administrative anchor for a systematic program intended to prepare and enable the Council to adopt AI methodically as a strategic instrument for improving operational efficiency, raising the quality of outputs, and maintaining institutional readiness in the face of rapid technological change. This formalization matters for two reasons. First, it created ownership: AI became a program of the institution rather than a collection of disconnected experiments.

Secondly, it created administrative legitimacy for policy development, interdepartmental coordination, data classification work, use-case prioritization, and subsequent implementation.

4. The Core Architecture: Six Interlocking Pillars

The FNC roadmap is built around six interlocking pillars. Their importance lies not only in their individual content, but in their sequence and interdependence. A parliamentary administration that begins with tools before governance or data governance will struggle. By contrast, an administration that connects these pillars from the outset creates the basis for scalable and trustworthy adoption.

4.1 AI Governance and Policy Framework

The first pillar is governance. In our case, governance means the set of rules, roles, decision paths, and policy principles that regulate how AI may be used inside the institution. This includes the definition of acceptable and unacceptable uses, the degree of human review required for different categories of outputs, the treatment of sensitive information, the relationship between AI-generated suggestions and official parliamentary outputs, and the responsibilities of the units involved in design, validation, and deployment.

The practical objective of this pillar is to ensure that AI use is lawful, ethically responsible, operationally reliable, and aligned with national values. In a parliament, governance also protects institutional credibility. For example, if AI is used to support legislative analysis, committee briefs, or session records, the institution must be able to state clearly what has been machine-assisted, what has been human-validated, and under what standards the output was produced.

4.2 Stakeholder and Needs Assessment

The second pillar is stakeholder and needs assessment. This is where many technology initiatives fail: they begin from the supply side of available tools rather than the demand side of parliamentary functions. The FNC therefore mapped the principal beneficiary groups and their needs before deciding which use-cases should be prioritized.

The roadmap identifies four broad groups. First are Members of the Council, whose needs include rapid access to information, comparative studies, impact analysis of legislation, tracking of government initiatives, scenario building, and translation support. Secondly, the General Secretariat requires AI support for parliamentary research, session and committee management, studies and reports, administrative operations, and reduction of repetitive workload. Thirdly, government entities interacting with the Council require smarter and more reliable channels for data exchange and coordination. Fourthly, society as the ultimate beneficiary requires simpler access to parliamentary information, better service channels, and greater transparency without compromising privacy.
The value of this pillar is operational precision. Once needs are clearly identified, AI projects can be judged by their institutional utility rather than by novelty. This allows resources to be directed toward the areas where parliamentary value is highest.

4.3 AI Enablement and Capacity Building

The third pillar is enablement. The FNC roadmap rightly assumes that institutional adoption cannot be achieved merely by giving staff access to models or interfaces. Capability must be built progressively. For this reason, the roadmap adopts a three-track model: awareness and culture-building; specialized training and capability development; and practical application and experimentation.

This sequencing is particularly important in parliamentary administrations. Awareness creates a common institutional vocabulary and reduces unrealistic expectations. Specialized training ensures that Members and officials learn role-appropriate methods of use. Practical experimentation then shifts the institution from abstract interest to disciplined application.

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The planned workshop cycle gives this pillar operational substance. It includes topics such as AI governance and digital sovereignty, data-driven oversight, parliamentary prompt engineering, and practical AI applications for reviewing legislation, detecting gaps, and comparing legal texts. This is exactly the type of targeted capability-building required in a legislature, where the value of AI depends on how precisely it can be applied to real procedural and analytical tasks.

4.4 Data Governance and Management

The fourth pillar is data governance and management, which in many respects is the true foundation of the entire architecture. AI systems are only as strong as the data environment on which they depend. A parliament that wishes to use AI seriously must therefore move beyond dispersed document holdings toward a structured institutional data environment.

The FNC roadmap proposes a central repository or data lake, with the explicit objective of consolidating data from different institutional sources into a clean, classified, and usable environment. This is a critical step. Parliamentary records often exist across minutes, committee papers, comparative studies, correspondence, video, media material, and policy files. Without integration, even strong AI tools will generate shallow results.

Equally important is classification. The roadmap defines four data categories: open, private, confidential, and top secret, with access permissions linked to each level. This enables the institution to distinguish clearly between public-facing use-cases, internal administrative use, and applications involving sovereign or highly sensitive information. In my judgment, this classification discipline is one of the strongest features of the FNC model because it connects parliamentary innovation directly to institutional trust and digital sovereignty.

4.5 Technical and Digital Infrastructure

The fifth pillar is technical infrastructure. Here again, the roadmap avoids simplistic assumptions. Parliamentary AI cannot be built on a single deployment model. Different data classes and different use-cases require different environments.
The FNC roadmap therefore identifies four infrastructure options: fully **on-premises** deployment; a **local hybrid** model; a **global hybrid** model; and **public cloud**. This is not a purely technical distinction. It is an institutional design choice. The on-premises model is suitable for sovereign and highly confidential data. The local hybrid model offers flexibility while preserving strong local control. The global hybrid model creates controlled access to wider services where appropriate. The public-cloud option may be suitable for public or non-classified use-cases.

By defining infrastructure in this graduated way, the architecture avoids the common error of treating all parliamentary AI use as if it presented the same risk profile. Instead, the environment is matched to the use-case and to the data it requires.

4.6 Risk and Challenge Management

The sixth pillar is risk and challenge management. In parliamentary settings, this must include more than technical security. It also includes output reliability, bias, hallucination risk, misuse by untrained users, overreliance on machine-generated summaries, poor traceability, and reputational risk where institutional outputs are involved.

The practical consequence is that validation rules and human oversight must be designed into the architecture from the beginning. In our model, AI is intended to augment parliamentary capacity, not replace responsibility. The institution must remain able to explain how an output was produced, who reviewed it, and on what basis it was used.

5. The FNC Roadmap: From Foundation to Institutional Maturity

The roadmap follows a three-phase progression that reflects sound administrative practice.

5.1 Phase One: Foundation and Readiness

The first phase establishes the institutional base: AI team formation, policy development, data classification, and expansion of institutional knowledge through research and directed experimentation. The principle underlying this phase is correct and should, in my view, guide any parliament embarking on AI adoption: knowledge should precede execution.

5.2 Phase Two: Experimental Expansion

The second phase is where the roadmap becomes especially concrete. It provides more than 24 experiments and use-cases. This is important because parliaments need practical evidence before formal integration. The objective is not to launch everything at once, but to test, measure, compare, and refine.

5.3 Phase Three: Maturity and Integration

The third phase provides the institutionalization path: comprehensive evaluation of the experimental stage; conversion of successful use cases into approved institutional projects; acceptance testing; formal launch by senior management decision; and integration into official procedures. This transition from experiment to approved institutional operation is one of the strongest elements of the FNC architecture because it closes the gap that often exists between innovation initiatives and operational reality.

6. Concrete Examples from the FNC Use-Case Portfolio

The practical strength of the FNC model lies in the breadth and specificity of its use-cases. What follows are selected examples showing how the architecture is translated into parliamentary operations.

6.1 Legislative Impact Assessor

One of the most important use-cases is the legislative impact assessor. For any parliament, the ability to move from textual consideration of a bill to structured assessment of its expected effects is a major institutional gain. The FNC model envisages an AI application that analyses current laws, draft laws and amendments and supports assessment using evidence, comparative approaches, and structured methodology adapted to the national context.
Its value is not to determine the political merit of legislation - that remains the prerogative of Members - but to improve the analytical basis on which legislative choices are made. This is especially relevant for committee work, legal studies, and the preparation of briefs before debate.

6.2 Federal Government Policy Expert

The government policy expert model is designed to support evidence-based analysis of federal public policies. This is particularly significant for oversight. Parliamentary scrutiny is often strongest when members and staff can connect policy claims, implementation indicators, comparative evidence, and historical parliamentary recommendations in a single analytical environment.

In practical terms, such a tool can help the institution review policy consistency, identify implementation issues, and support more informed parliamentary questioning and recommendations.

6.3 Integrated Parliamentary Observatory

The integrated parliamentary observatory is a particularly strong example of AI used as an institutional coordination tool. It is designed to track and analyze federal government projects and link them to parliamentary recommendations. This creates a structured mechanism for post-recommendation follow-up and for assessing how parliamentary interventions connect to executive activity.
For parliamentary administrations, this type of observatory is highly valuable because it strengthens continuity. Recommendations often risk dispersal across time and across institutions. An observatory helps convert them into traceable institutional knowledge.

6.4 Parliamentary Minutes and Session Intelligence

The roadmap contains several mutually reinforcing use-cases around parliamentary records. The smart minutes application converts audio recordings of sessions into accurate written text, refines them into Modern Standard Arabic, and produces related outputs such as session briefs, news items, and time-based analytical summaries. The minutes analyzer then takes these textual records further by transforming them from static text into structured data suitable for deeper analysis and production of committee decisions and staff tasks.

Together, these applications illustrate a mature parliamentary logic. The first layer solves the production problem: how to create fast, accurate, and standardized records. The second solves the analytical problem: how to extract trends, participation patterns, issues, and institutional insights from those records.

6.5 Parliamentary Performance Evaluation and Behavioral Modelling

The roadmap also includes a parliamentary performance evaluator and a behavioral modelling application. These tools analyze Members' interventions in session transcripts and extract qualitative and quantitative indicators reflecting participation patterns, themes of interest, and styles of interaction. This is a sophisticated use of AI because it shifts parliamentary analytics from anecdotal impressions to structured evidence.

Naturally, such tools must be governed carefully. Their institutional value lies in internal analysis, performance understanding, and support for parliamentary development - not in replacing political judgment.

6.6 AI Parliamentary Researcher

The AI parliamentary researcher is one of the clearest examples of how the FNC architecture connects data integration with research support. This system is intended to support the General Secretariat's researchers through smart analytical tools, a precise research methodology, and direct integration with more than ten official UAE government sources and six global research databases.

This matters greatly in parliamentary practice. Researchers do not need generic answers; they need reliable synthesis anchored in trusted sources, with speed, traceability, and relevance to parliamentary business. A properly governed AI research assistant can materially improve the quality and timeliness of committee and plenary support.

6.7 Smart Reader and Interactive Document Workflows

The smart reader use-case turns the document itself into an interactive environment. Rather than merely opening a report or bill, the user can interrogate the document conversationally, obtain concise answers, generate summaries, and view organized outputs within the document interface.

For parliamentary work, where large files must often be processed under time pressure, this is not a convenience alone. It changes the speed at which Members and officials can extract the substance of complex materials.

6.8 Lisan: AI Language and Drafting Review

The roadmap includes a specialized language model, 'Lisan', aimed at improving the quality of parliamentary drafting through precise linguistic review and stronger Arabic usage across documents and minutes. This is an excellent reminder that parliamentary modernization is not only about analytics and data. It is equally about the quality, clarity, and authority of official text.

In legislatures where the integrity of wording matters, language tools designed specifically for parliamentary usage can generate significant value, provided that human editorial authority remains intact.

6.9 External Relations, Country Files, and Parliamentary Diplomacy

A particularly distinctive part of the FNC portfolio is the application of AI to parliamentary diplomacy and external relations. The roadmap includes an external relations assistant able to support position papers, feasibility studies, draft decisions, and discussion proposals for inter-parliamentary unions within the policy framework of the UAE. It also includes a smart country file system designed to prepare standardized country profiles drawing on IPU data and other trusted information.

This is a noteworthy innovation. Many discussions of parliamentary AI focus narrowly on chamber procedure. The FNC model recognizes that modern parliamentary administrations also support diplomacy, protocol, comparative analysis, and international positioning. AI can be highly valuable in these functions when properly governed.

6.10 Media and Public Interaction

The media monitor and the virtual receptionist illustrate how AI can connect the institution both to the information environment and to the public. The media monitor is designed to analyze media content in the UAE with particular attention to the FNC and related legislative and oversight issues. The virtual receptionist is designed to answer enquiries, provide immediate information, and receive complaints using voice and language technologies.

These use-cases are significant because they extend AI beyond internal productivity into transparency, service, and responsiveness. For parliamentary institutions seeking to improve public accessibility, this is an area with considerable promise.

6.11 Translation, Protocol, and Administrative Coordination

The FNC roadmap also includes an AI translator for meetings and bilateral encounters and a protocol and parliamentary delegation coordinator. Taken together, these demonstrate that parliamentary AI can support not only core legislative analysis but also the administrative architecture that enables parliamentary work to function smoothly.

This breadth is important. A parliament is not a single process. It is an ecosystem of deliberation, records, coordination, protocol, research, public communication, and institutional memory. The FNC use-case portfolio reflects that reality.

7. What Distinguishes the FNC Model

Several features distinguish the FNC model from more limited AI initiatives.
First, it is enterprise-wide. The roadmap is not confined to one department or one technical platform. It spans Members, the General Secretariat, government interaction, and public-facing functions.

Secondly, it is governance-led. The institution began with formal team formation, policy framing, classification logic, and controlled enablement.
Thirdly, it is sovereignty-aware. The graduated infrastructure model - on-premises, local hybrid, global hybrid, and public cloud - allows the institution to match deployment conditions to data sensitivity.

Fourthly, it is designed for institutionalization. The roadmap explicitly sets out the path from experiment to approved business requirement, testing, launch, and embedding in official procedures.

Finally, it treats AI not as an abstract innovation theme but as a parliamentary operating model. That is, in my view, the most important distinction.

8. Relevance for Other Parliaments

Other parliaments may differ in scale, constitutional design, language environment, and digital maturity. Yet the underlying institutional questions are strikingly similar. Any parliament considering AI seriously will have to decide how to govern its use, how to classify and structure its data, how to build user capability, how to choose infrastructure according to risk, and how to identify high-value use cases without fragmenting the institution.

For that reason, the FNC experience may be useful less as a template for exact replication than as a sequence of institutional decisions. The generalizable lesson is clear: start with architecture, build governance and data discipline, train systematically, experiment with purpose, and move to institutional integration only when value and control have been demonstrated.

9. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence in parliaments should not be understood as a question of software alone. It is a question of institutional design. The experience of the Federal National Council suggests that the most promising path is to build AI as a parliamentary architecture - one that connects policy, data, infrastructure, people, and workflows in a coherent system.

When approached in this way, AI can strengthen legislative analysis, enrich oversight, improve record integrity, support parliamentary diplomacy, expand public accessibility, and preserve institutional memory. But these outcomes do not arise automatically from tools. They arise from governance, discipline, and design.
That, in summary, is the proposition the FNC wishes to share with colleagues at ASGP: if artificial intelligence is to serve parliaments well, it must be institutionalized deliberately, responsibly, and in direct service of parliamentary function.

Mr Mohammad Albunain, Bahrain, asked about the electronic platform and whether it was possible for the system to recognise new accents or do you always need to train the system on new accents.

Dr Omar Abdulrahman Alnuaimi, UAE, responded they have a lot of different accents, in the current system there is a 98% to 99% accuracy rate for all accents and the minutes are ready just 30-minutes after the session.

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

7. Communication by Mr Gabriel Malebang, National Assembly of Botswana

Dear Dr. José Pedro MONTERO, President of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments (ASGP);
Members of the ASGP Executive Committee;
Distinguished Secretaries-General;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great honour and pleasure that I address you in my capacity of Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, a position I assumed in May 2025 and to which I was formally appointed in November of the same year. Dear colleagues, as soon as I learned that the Spring Session of our ASGP was to be held here in this beautiful city of Istanbul, I decided to prepare a paper entitled *"Appointment, Powers and Duties of the Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique"*, as part of the broader theme *"How are Secretaries-General appointed and what is the scope of their role?"*.

In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that the Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic appoints the Secretary-General after consultation with the Standing Committee, which is the Bureau of Parliament, composed of Members of Parliament from all parliamentary groups, in accordance with their respective representation, based on percentages. Such an appointment is made on a temporary basis from among individuals of recognised competence and integrity, with more than ten years' management experience in the public administration.
In the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, the Secretary-General, who holds the status of a senior state official, heads the executive branch of Parliament, assisted by two Directors-General, one in charge of the legislative business and another in charge of planning, administration and finance.

Dear Colleagues
The Secretary-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique is accountable for managing and coordinating all technical and administrative support services for parliamentary activities, ranging from legislative business to social support, including areas such as specialist technical advisory services, parliamentary documentation, public relations and protocol, inter-parliamentary cooperation, planning, implementation and administrative, financial, property and human resources management, capacity building and training, including the preparation of proposals for the award of scholarships to attend courses or undertake traineeships at national and international institutions, amongst other matters deemed relevant under the law.

Likewise, it is the responsibility of the Secretary-General to resolve the day-to-day administrative issues of the Assembly of the Republic and to perform any other duties assigned to him by order of the Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic, as well as to represent the Secretariat-General before the State administration and other national and international bodies, including the conclusion of cooperation agreements with counterpart institutions and other partners.

A particularly important aspect of the Secretary-General's portfolio is the preparation of the draft budget, the balance sheet report, the trial balances and the Management Account of the Assembly of the Republic for each financial year, as well as the monthly trial balances on budget implementation; these documents are crucial to the implementation of Parliament Annual Work Programmes and the accountability process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues;

The list of powers I have just outlined represents a summary of the provisions set out in Law No. 13/2013 of 12 August, which establishes the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, currently in force.
However, given the dynamic nature of organisations, it is worth noting that this law is currently under review, in order to bring it into line with current demands; one of the areas to be improved concerns the powers of the Secretary-General, given our view that some of the Board of Administrators' current powers are misplaced.

Examples of such powers include the preparation of activity programme and budget proposals, the report and the Management Account, as well as proposals for the appointment, promotion, progression and mobility of civil servants and staff working for the Assembly of the Republic, which we believe should fall exclusively within the remit of the Secretary-General, in his capacity as

coordinator of technical and administrative support services for parliamentary activity.

Mr President of the ASGP, Dear Secretaries-General, respected colleagues, this sums up my remarks on the topic ***"How are Secretaries-General appointed and what is the scope of their role?"*** based on the specific example of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique. Thank you very much for your kind attention.

8. Announcement regarding interpretation

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, recalled that last year the ASGP Executive Committee received a proposal from Mr Philippe Schwab, former President of the Association, to change the Association's working practices to provide Spanish and Arabic interpretation in addition to French and English. To make this change, the ASGP would need to:

- change its rules, to add Spanish and Arabic as working languages of the ASGP; and
- increase membership fees by 25% to cover the cost.

He recalled that in Geneva the Executive Committee agreed to send a survey to all members of the Association to ask about changing the rules and increasing membership fees. He informed the Association that the survey received 35 responses.

- 82% of respondents to the survey were in favour of increasing membership fees by 25% to pay for Spanish and Arabic interpretation.
- Of those that replied to the survey, only 2 countries would benefit directly from the change.

Given the positive response to the survey, he proposed that Association formally agree to increase membership fees from 2027 onwards.

The association agreed.

He proposed that the Association change its rules at the next session in Tanzania.

The association agreed.

9. Concluding remarks

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, thanked his colleagues for a fascinating debate.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12:35

SIXTH SITTING

Sunday 19 April 2026 (afternoon)

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 10:00

1. Introductory remarks

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, welcomed everyone back to the sixth and final sitting of the ASGP.

2. GENERAL DEBATE WITH INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUPS: HE ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ADMINISTRATION IN MEASURING THE LEGISLATIVE IMPACT OF LAWS

- What role does the parliamentary administration play in the evaluation of laws?
- The mechanisms and methodologies used by parliamentary secretariats to assess the post-enactment impact of legislation.
- How evidence-based evaluation contributes to improving law-making quality and accountability.
- How collaboration with academic and research institutions, and using AI tools, can strengthen legislative impact assessment frameworks.

Dr Omar Abdulrahman Alnuaimi, UAE, introduced the debate by saying this issue is growing in importance because legislation is not merely judged by the quality of the law but also how effective it is at achieving the objectives and avoiding unintended side effects.

Parliamentary administrations play an important role in monitoring effectiveness by using analytics and determine measures. He said the aim of this debate is not to identify benchmarks but to compare and contrast the different methods used by different parliaments to analyse effectiveness of the legislation.

__Ms Susana Santos__ (Portugal), rapporteur for the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking group; __Dr Gabriel Malebang (Botswana),__ rapporteur for the English-speaking group; __Mr Jean Nguvulu Khoji__ (Democratic Republic of the Congo), rapporteur for the French-speaking group; and __Mr Mohamed Almutairi__ (Saudi Arabia), rapporteur for the Arabic-speaking group, then presented the conclusions of their respective groups.

2. Orders of the day for the autumn session 2026

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, announced that the dates for the next ASGP meeting in Tanzania would be from Tuesday 6 October to Friday 9 October.

Mr Daniel Eliufoo, Tanzania presented a video entitled Arusha, the city that will host the 153rd IPU Assembly.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, presented the following 3 general debates proposed by the Executive Committee on the basis of suggestions from members:

1. Training for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff [small group discussion]

2. How is Parliament funded, what is the budget allocation and approval processes? [small group discussion]

3. Unicameral or bicameral parliament: what are the advantages and disadvantages? Please share concrete experiences from your parliaments [open debate]

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President then announced 2 themes:

1. Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments
2. Best practices for the recruitment of parliamentary staff
3. In the news and innovations at Parliament

11. Concluding Remarks

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, invited Mr Hüseyin Kürşat Kirbiyik, Secretary General of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, to take the floor.

Mr Hüseyin Kürşat Kirbiyik, Türkiye, thanked all the members and invited them to explore in Istanbul further during their stay.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, thanked colleagues for an excellent discussion and said he looked forward to working with them again in Istanbul. He concluded by thanking the interpreters for making everything possible.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 17.30