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 Tanzania
(Mr Baraka Leonard, Tanzania)

Strategic Internal Assessment of Operations (SIAO)
(Mr Eric Janse, Canada)

The National Assembly in the age of AI
(Mr Kim Sangsoo, Republic of Korea)

Parliamentary engagement with young Australians: inaugural National Youth Parliament
(Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia)

Best practice for the recruitment of parliamentary staff
(Ms Kim Nagtzaam, Netherlands)

Training for Members and parliamentary staff
(Dr Gabriel Malebang, Botswana)

Best practice for the recruitment of parliamentary staff
(Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland)

In the news, innovations and best practices in parliament
(Mr Ali Hajimohammadi, Iran)

Enhancing Legislative and Oversight Performance: a Framework for MPs and senior staff
(Dr Firas Zuhair Jaafar, Iraq)

Unicameral or bicameral Parliament: what are the advantages and disadvantages?
(General Debate)

How is Parliament funded, and what are the processes for allocating and approving the budget?
(General Debate)

Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments
(Mr Tariq Bin Waheed, Pakistan)

Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments
(Mr Antonion Mahumane, Mozambique)

Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments
(Dr Silke Albin, Germany)

Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments
(Mr Golam Sorwar Bhuiyan, Bangladesh)

Parliament in institutional reform: Vietnam's experience in reshaping the State and Local Governance
(Ms Le Thu Ha, Vietnam)

When everything changes overnight: parliamentary resilience in times of crisis
(Mr Dan Marzouk, Israel)

How is Parliament funded, and what are the processes for allocating and approving the budget?
(General Debate)

How Parliaments respond to pressure
(ASGP-IPU joint session)

Building parliamentary cyber resilience: an annual cybersecurity programme for parliaments
(Ms Anabela Cabral Ferreira, Portugal)

Review of the ASGP / 75th year / Nº 229 / Arusha, 7 – 9 October 2026

MINUTES OF THE AUTUMN SESSION

Arusha (Tanzania)

7 to 9 October 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 Autumn Session 2026

Geneva 7 to 9 October 2026

List of attendance

MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTES PRESENT

COUNTRY	**CHAMBER or PARLIAMENT**	**NAME and TITLE**
Algeria	National Council	Mr Ahcène DJOUAHRA **for** Mr Mohamed DADA (SG)
Algeria	National People's Assembly	Mr Djalal SALIM (SG)
Australia	House of Representatives	Ms Claressa SURTEES (SG)
Austria	Parliament	Mr Alexis WINTONIAK (DSG)
Azerbaijan	Milli Majlis	Mr Farid HAJIYEV (SG)
Bangladesh	National Assembly	Mr Md. Golam Sorwar BHUIYAN (SG)
Bhutan	National Council	Mr Tenzin THINLEY (SG)
Botswana	National Assembly	Dr Gabriel Gosiame G. MALEBANG (SG)
Brazil	Senate	Mr Evandro Aparecido BALDUTTI **for** Ms Ilana TROMBKA (DG)
Burkina Faso	People's Legislative Assembly	Mr Armand PALM (SGA)
Burundi	Senate	Mr Yared NYANDWI (DSG)
Cambodia	Senate	Mr NGOUN Sokveng **for** Mr LAY Samkol (SG)
Cameroon	Senate	Mr Gustave Léopold NGANE (SG)
Canada	House of Commons	Mr Eric JANSE (SG)
Chile	Chamber of Deputies	Mr Juan Pablo GALLEGUILLOS (DSG)
Chile	Senate	Mr Andrés SALAS (DSG)
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)
Djibouti	National Assembly	Mr Ismael Goulal BOUDINE (SG)
Equatorial Guinea	Chamber of Deputies	Mr Armando ESONO ONGUENE (SG)
Estonia	Parliament	Mr Antero HABICHT (SG)
Fiji	Parliament	Mrs Jeanette EMBERSON (SG)
France	Senate	M Stanislas GODEFROY **for** Mr Eric TAVERNIER (SG, Présidence)
Gambia (The)	National Assembly	Mr Kalipha MM MBYE (SG)
Georgia	Parliament	Mr Kakha OKROJANASHVILI (SG)
Germany	Bundesrat	Dr Georg KLEEMANN (DSG)
Germany	Bundestag	Dr Silke ALBIN (DSG)
Iceland	Parliament	Mr Sverrir JÓNSSON (SG)
India	Council of States	Mr P.C. MODY (SG)
Iran	Islamic Parliament	Mr Ali HAJIMOHAMMADI **for** Mr Alireza Sharifi BARZEGAR (SG)
Iraq	Council of Representatives	Dr Firas JAAFAR **for** Mr Safwan Bashir AL-JARJARI (SG)
Israel	Knesset	Mr Dan MARZOUK (SG)
Ireland	House of Representatives	Ms Mellissa ENGLISH **for** Ms Elaine GUNN (SG)
Italy	Chamber of Deputies	Ms Maria Teresa CALABRÒ **for** Dr Fabrizio CASTALDI (SG)
Jordan	House of Representatives	Mr Awwad AL GHUWAIRI (SG)
Kenya	Senate	Mr Jeremiah NYEGENYE (SG)
Korea (Republic of)	National Assembly	Mr KIM Sangsoo (DSG)
Libya	House of Representatives	Mr Ahmed HASHASH **for** Mr Abdualla ALMASRI (SG)
Lithuania/*Lituanie*	Parliament	Mr Algirdas STONČAITIS (SG)
Malawi	National Assembly	Mrs Fiona KALEMBA (SG)

Mauritius	National Assembly	Mrs Bibi Safeena LOTUN (SG)
Mongolia	State Great Khural	Ulziisaikhan LUVSANDORJ (SG)
Montenegro	Parliament	Mr Boban STANIŠIĆ (SG)
Morocco	House of Councillors	Mr Assad ZEROUALI (SG)
Mozambique	Assembly of the Republic	Mr Jaime MATIAS **for** 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	Ms Kim NAGTZAAM (SG)
Netherlands	House of Representatives	Mr Peter OSKAM (SG)
Nigeria	Senate	Mr Emmanuel ODO (SG)
Norway	Parliament	Mr Kyrre GRIMSTAD (SG)
Oman	State Council	Mr Khalid AL SAADI (SG)
Oman	Shura Council	Mr Ahmed MohaMsd AL NADABI (SG)
Pakistan	Senate	Mr Tariq Bin WAHEED **for** Mr Syed Hasnain HAIDER (SG)
Poland	Senate	Mrs Ewa POLKOWSKA (SG)
Portugal	Assembly of the Republic	Ms Anabela CABRAL FERREIRA (SG)
Romania	Senate	Ms Arany VIKARIUS **for** Mr Mario Ovidiu OPREA (SG)
Rwanda	Senate	Mr Olivier MUSHIMIRE (SG)
Senegal	National Assembly	MR Saloly Fadel TOURE (DSG)
Slovenia	National Assembly	Ms Špela OCVIRK (SG)
South Africa	National Assembly	Mr Masibulele XASO (SG)
South Sudan	Transitional National Legislative Assembly	Mr Santino Majak DENG (SG)
Spain/*Espagne*	Senate	Mr Eugenio DE SANTOS CANALEJO (SGA)

Switzerland	National Assembly	Mr Philippe SCHWAB (SG)
Tanzania	National Assembly	Mr Baraka Ildephonce LEONARD (SG)
Thailand	Senate	Mrs Noppakao SUKHANUNTH **for** Mrs Pannita SATARNTRAIPOPE (SG)
Thailand	Senate	Mrs Nawanan NETITHANAKUL (DSG)
Thailand	House of Representatives	Ms Steejit TAIPIBOONSUK (DSG)
Timor Leste	National Parliament	Mr João Rui AMARAL (DSG)
Uganda/*Ouganda*	Parliament	Mrs Jane Rose IKIROR (DSG)
United Arab Emirates	Federal National Council	Mrs Afra ALBASTI (DSG)
United Kingdom	House of Lords	Ms Chloe MAWSON (SG)
United Kingdom	House of Commons	Ms Sarah DAVIES (DSG)
Uruguay	Senate	Dr José Pedro MONTERO (SG)
Uruguay	House of Representatives	Mr Emiliano METEDIERA (DSG)
Vietnam	National Assembly	Mrs LE Thu Ha (DSG)
Zambia	Parliament	Mr Sage SAMUWIKA (DSG) **for** Mrs Loveness MAYAKA (SG)
Zimbabwe	National Assembly	Mr Kennedy Mugove CHOKUDA (SG)
Zimbabwe	National Assembly	Mr Asha JENJE (DSG)
Zimbabwe	Senate	Ms Helen B. DINGANI (DSG)

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)	Mr Alex OBATRE (SG)
Maghreb Consultative Council	MR Said MOKADEM (SG)
Pan-African Parliament	Mrs Lindiwe KHUMALO (SG)

Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC)	Mrs Boemo SEKGOMA (SG)
West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)	Mr Seydou ISSAKA (SG)

Table of contents

MINUTES OF THE AUTUMN SESSION 1

List of attendance 4

FIRST SITTING 12

Wednesday 7 October 2026 (morning) 12

1. Opening of the session 12

2. Members 12

3. Orders of the day 13

4. ASGP staffing 14

5. Interpretation 14

6. Welcome and brief presentation on the parliamentary system in Tanzania, Mr Baraka Leonard, Clerk of the National Assembly of Tanzania 15

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT 20

7. Communication: Mr Eric Janse, House of Commons of Canada on 'Strategic Internal Assessment of Operations (SIAO)' 20

8. Communication: Mr Kim Sangsoo, National Assembly of Korea on 'The National Assembly in the Age of AI' 27

9. Communication: Ms Claressa Surtees, Australian House of Representatives, on 'Parliamentary engagement with young Australians: inaugural National Youth Parliament' 35

10. Concluding remarks 39

SECOND SITTING 40

Wednesday 7 October 2026 (afternoon) 40

1. Introductory remarks 40

2. Presentation on recent projects undertaken by the IPU, Ms Anda Filip, Secretary General of the IPU 40

THEME: BEST PRACTICES FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY STAFF 42

3. Communication: Ms Kim Nagtzaam, Netherlands Senate on 'Best practice for the recruitment of parliamentary staff' 42

4. Communication: Dr Gabriel Malebang, National Assembly of Botswana on 'Training for Members and parliamentary staff' 45

5. Communication: Mr Philippe Schwab, Federal Assembly of Switzerland on 'Best practice for the recruitment of parliamentary staff' 52

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT 60

6. Communication: Mr Ali Hajimohammadi, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 'In the news, innovations, new technology and best practices at Parliament' 60

7. Communication: Dr Firas Zuhair Jaafar, Iraq Parliament, on 'Enhancing Legislative and Oversight Performance: A framework for MPs and Senior Staff' 65

8. GENERAL DEBATE: UNICAMERAL OR BICAMERAL PARLIAMENT: WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES? PLEASE SHARE CONCRETE EXPERIENCES FROM YOUR PARLIAMENTS (*5 MINUTES PER SPEAKER*) 70

9. Concluding remarks 80

THIRD SITTING 81

Thursday 8 October 2026(morning) 81

1. Introductory remarks 81

3. GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: How is Parliament funded, and what are the processes for allocating and approving the budget? 81

3. Concluding remarks 83

FOURTH SITTING 84

Wednesday 8 October 2026 (afternoon) 84

1. Introductory remarks 84

THEME: MECHANISMS FOR INTERNATIONAL AND PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION AMONG PARLIAMENTS 84

2. Communication: Mr Tariq Bin Waheed, Senate of Pakistan on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments' 84

3. Communication: Mr António Mahumane, Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments' 88

4. Communication: Dr Silke Albin, German Bundestag on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments' 90

5. Communication: Mr Golam Sorwar Bhuiyan, Parliament of Bangladesh on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments' 97

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT 101

6. Communication: Ms Le Thu Ha, National Assembly of Vietnam, on 'Parliament in institutional reform: Viet Nam's Experience in Reshaping the State and Local Governance' 101

7. Communication: Mr Dan Marzouk, Knesset of Israel, on 'When Everything Changes Overnight: Parliamentary Resilience in Times of Crisis' 106

8. Presentation on proposed amendments to the ASGP Rules 112

9. Concluding remarks 113

FIFTH SITTING 114

Friday 9 October 2026 (morning) 114

1. Introductory remarks 114

2. Members 114

3. Update on the work of the Centre for Innovation in Parliament, Andy Richardson 114

4. GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: How is Parliament funded, and what are the processes for allocating and approving the budget? 115
5. Concluding remarks 116
SIXTH SITTING 117
Wednesday 9 October 2026 (afternoon) 117
1. ASGP-IPU joint session on 'How Parliaments Respond to Pressure' 117
2. Introductory remarks 117
THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT 117
3. Communication: Ms Anabela Cabral Ferreira, Assembly of the Republic of Portugal on 'Building Parlimentary Cyber Resilience: An Annual Cybersecurity Programme for Parliaments' 117
4. Orders of the day for the spring session 2027 122
5. Elections 124
6. Budget 124
7. Concluding Remark 124

FIRST SITTING

Wednesday 7 October 2026 (morning)

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 11.10AM

1. Opening of the session

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, opened the session and warmly welcomed members of the Association and especially new members.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, recalled that, in order to preserve the unique character of the Association, which enables the leaders of parliamentary administrations to meet and exchange views on the functioning of parliaments, the ASGP had long ensured that political issues did not form part of its debates. He stressed that political matters fell within the remit of elected parliamentarians and were debated within the framework of the IPU.

He added that, within the ASGP, discussions should remain focused on the sharing of knowledge and experiences among colleagues faced with the particular responsibilities associated with the roles of Secretary General or Clerk of a Parliament.

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 Davit HAMBARYAN	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Armenia
Mr Roland WEINERT	Secretary General of the Parliament, Austria
Mr Md. Golam Sorwar BHUIYAN	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Bangladesh
Mr Guilherme Barbosa BRANDÃO	Director General of the Chamber of Deputies, Brazil
Ms Milena HRISTOVA	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Bulgaria

Mr Nilton Filipe FERNANDES DOS REIS	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Cabo Verde
Mr Luis ROJAS GALLARDO	Secretary General of the Senate, Chile
Mr Juan Pablo GALLEGUILLOS	Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies, Chile
Mr Andrés SALAS	Deputy Secretary General of the Senate, Chile
Mr Jorge Enrique LÓPEZ TERÁN	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Ecuador
Ms Amal ALMUTAWA	Acting Secretary General of the National Assembly, Kuwait
Ms Kim NAGTZAAM	Secretary General of the Senate, Netherlands
Mr Abdoulaye TOUDJANI IDRISSA	Secretary General of the Advisory Council for the Refoundation, Niger
Mr Ibrahim SIDI	Clerk of the House of Representatives, Nigeria
Mr Renato BANTUG Jr	Secretary General of the Senate, Philippines
Mr KOH Yongjin	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Republic of Korea
Mr KIM Sangsoo	Deputy Secretary General of the National Assembly, Republic of Korea
Mr Olivier MUSHIMIRE	Clerk of the Senate, Rwanda
Mr Fadel TOURE	Deputy Secretary General of the National Assembly, Senegal
Ms Špela OCVIRK	Secretary General of the National Assembly, Slovenia
Mr Eugenio DE SANTOS CANALEJO	Secretary General of the Senate, Spain

For associate membership:

Mr Dedou Pagnamsi HEMOU	Secretary General of the ECOWAS Parliament

The list of new members was approved by the Association.

3. Orders of the day

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

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

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

The agenda for the session was agreed to.

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

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President asked his colleagues to suggest topics for themes and general debates at the next session in Geneva via an online form. A QR code was displayed on the screens for this purpose.

4. ASGP staffing

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, informed members that the co-secretaries Ms Alice Lala and Ms Elektra Garvie-Adams are not present in Tanzania as neither can travel for health reasons. They will provide support remotely via WhatsApp and email during the conference.

To ensure everything runs smoothly, he welcomed back Ms Rhiannon Hollis, former British Secretary to the ASGP, who would be assisting at the Tanzania session. He then introduced Ms Emilie Prevel, who will be replacing Ms Karine Velasco from the next session. He concluded by expressing the Association's deep thanks to Ms Karine Velasco for her many years of excellent service to the ASGP.

5. Interpretation

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, informed members that interpretation for the session is provided in English and French by the ASGP, and thanks to the support of the IPU, in Arabic and Spanish. He recalled the decision of the Association in Istanbul, to raise membership fees by 25% to cover the cost of providing all four languages from 2027 onwards. He concluded by thanking the interpreters, who make ASGP meetings possible.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, first thanked Mr Leonard for such an excellent cultural programme and then welcomed him to the stage.

6. Welcome and brief presentation on the parliamentary system in Tanzania, Mr Baraka Leonard, Clerk of the National Assembly of Tanzania

Mr President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments
Distinguished Secretary Generals and Clerks,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great pleasure, on behalf of the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, to warmly welcome you to Tanzania and in particular, to the beautiful city of Arusha.

We are deeply honoured that Tanzania has been given the opportunity to host this year's Session of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments.
We welcome you not simply as visitors, but as colleagues and partners in parliamentary administration.

The ASGP provides a unique opportunity to learn from one another, not only about parliamentary procedure, but also about how parliamentary institutions preserve continuity, support elected Members, respond to change and remain effective in a rapidly changing environment. As hosts, my team and I have made the necessary preparations to ensure that this meeting provides a conducive environment for meaningful exchange, learning and professional engagement.

The choice of Arusha as the venue for this distinguished gathering is particularly appropriate. Arusha has long been associated with diplomacy, dialogue, regional cooperation and international engagement. Over the years, the city has provided a platform for important regional and international processes, bringing together people and institutions from different parts of Africa and the wider international community.

This gathering also comes at a particularly significant moment in the history of parliamentary institutions in Tanzania. In December this year, we will mark 100 years since the establishment of the Legislative Council of Tanganyika in 1926, the institution from which our present parliamentary system evolved. This centenary provides an opportunity not only to reflect on a century of parliamentary evolution, but also to recognise the enduring importance of institutional continuity, parliamentary traditions and professional parliamentary administration.
It is therefore fitting that parliamentary professionals from different constitutional traditions meet here to exchange experiences on the institutions that underpin representative government, accountability, good governance and the rule of law.
Our gathering in Arusha also provides an opportunity to experience something of Tanzania's rich cultural and natural heritage. Yesterday, you had the opportunity to visit the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and experience, first-hand, one of Tanzania's most remarkable natural treasures. We hope that what you experienced there offered you a glimpse of the extraordinary heritage that our country has to share.

From the Serengeti and Mount Kilimanjaro to the Great Lakes, the Indian Ocean and the historic islands of Zanzibar, Tanzania reflects a remarkable diversity of landscapes, cultures and traditions. Arusha, with its well-established transport connections, provides a convenient gateway to many of these destinations.
We hope that your stay in Tanzania will complement the professional exchanges of this meeting with an appreciation of the heritage, diversity and hospitality that Tanzania is privileged to share with you and that your time here will be both professionally rewarding and personally memorable.

Please do not hesitate to approach any member of our staff should you require any assistance or if there is anything we can do to make your stay more comfortable. Karibuni sana Tanzania. Welcome to Tanzania.

Tanzania's Constitutional and Parliamentary Setting
Let me now briefly introduce the parliamentary system of Tanzania.
The United Republic of Tanzania was established in 1964 through the Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. This history is important for understanding the structure of our Parliament today.

Tanzania operates a presidential system with parliamentary features, in which a directly elected President serves as both Head of State and Head of Government, while the Prime Minister leads Government business in the House and is accountable to the National Assembly. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President from among the Members of Parliament and is subsequently approved by the National Assembly. Ministers are appointed by the President from among the Members of Parliament and are collectively responsible to the National Assembly.
This constitutional arrangement operates within a unicameral parliamentary framework, in which Parliament consists of two constituent parts: the President and the National Assembly. The President exercises important constitutional and executive functions, including the power to assent to or withhold assent from Bills passed by Parliament and, in accordance with constitutional procedures, to dissolve Parliament.

The National Assembly is the single legislative chamber and serves as the principal representative and legislative organ of the United Republic. It exercises legislative authority in respect of Union matters and other matters concerning Mainland Tanzania.

Zanzibar within Tanzania's constitutional structure has its own legislature, known as the House of Representatives. The House exercises legislative authority over matters within Zanzibar that are not Union Matters, in accordance with the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Constitution of Zanzibar.
This distinction is important because the existence of the House of Representatives does not make the Parliament of the United Republic bicameral. Tanzania's Parliament remains unicameral, with the National Assembly as its single parliamentary chamber, while the House of Representatives is a separate constitutional legislature responsible for Zanzibar's Non-Union matters.

Composition of the National Assembly

The National Assembly is composed of different categories of Members, reflecting the representative and Union character of Tanzania's parliamentary system. These include Members elected to represent constituencies, women Members elected through special seats, Members elected by the House of Representatives of Zanzibar, the Attorney General, Members appointed by the President and the Speaker where the Speaker is not elected from among the Members. The total number of seats would be 405 if the Speaker is elected from outside the National Assembly.
In terms of its current composition, the National Assembly comprises 404 members. These include 272 Members elected from constituencies, representing approximately 67.3% of the total membership; 116 women Members elected through special seats, representing 28.7%; 5 Members elected by the House of Representatives of Zanzibar, representing 1.2%; up to 10 Members appointed by the President, representing 2.5%; and the Attorney General, representing 0.2%. As the current Speaker is an elected Member of Parliament, the Speaker is included among the 404 Members.
In terms of political-party representation, the National Assembly is predominantly composed of Members from the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), with 387 Members, representing approximately 96% of the Members currently in office. ACT Wazalendo has 9 Members (2.2%), CHAUMMA has 3 Members (0.7%), and NCCR-Mageuzi has 1 Member (0.2%), while the Attorney General serves as an ex-officio Member. There are currently three vacant seats, which will be filled in accordance with the applicable legal and constitutional procedures.

In terms of gender representation, women constitute 159 Members, or approximately 39.7% of the current membership, while men constitute 242 Members, or 60.3%. The female representation comprises 38 women elected from constituencies, 116 women elected through special seats, 3 women appointed by the President, and 2 women from the House of Representatives of Zanzibar.

This composition brings together direct constituency representation, gender representation, presidential appointments and the Attorney General and the Union dimension within a single legislative chamber, reflecting the distinctive and inclusive character of Tanzania's parliamentary system.

Parliamentary Leadership and Administration
In Tanzania, parliamentary leadership is provided principally through the Speaker, who presides over the National Assembly and ensures that its proceedings are conducted in accordance with the Constitution and the Standing Orders. This leadership is supported by a professional parliamentary administration headed by the Clerk, which provides the institutional, procedural and administrative support necessary for the effective functioning of the National Assembly.
The parliamentary administration is headed by the Clerk. Article 87 of the Constitution provides for the office of the Clerk, while Article 88 provides for the Secretariat of the National Assembly.

The Clerk is the Chief Executive of the Office of the National Assembly and has, among other responsibilities, the duty to provide procedural and institutional support to the Speaker and Members and to ensure the effective functioning of the parliamentary administration.

For us, the parliamentary administration is not merely an administrative support structure. It is the institutional memory, professional backbone and continuity mechanism of Parliament.

The Role of Parliament
Like other Parliaments represented here today, the Parliament of Tanzania discharges four principal functions: legislation, representation and oversight and accountability. While these functions are exercised through plenary sittings, much of the detailed work is undertaken through the committee system, where Members scrutinise legislation, Government policies and programmes, public expenditure and their implementation.

The committee dimension is particularly important because Article 96 of the Constitution empowers the National Assembly to establish Standing Committees for the better discharge of its functions. This recognises that the effective performance of parliamentary functions cannot depend on plenary proceedings alone, but also requires the detailed scrutiny undertaken through committees, supported by professional staff who assist Members in carrying out their work.

The Role of Committees
Our committees provide an important mechanism through which Members undertake detailed examination of Government policies, legislation, budgets and their implementation. They also provide opportunities for engagement with stakeholders and the public.

This is increasingly important because modern Parliaments are expected not merely to legislate, but also to scrutinise, question, listen, analyse evidence and engage with citizens.

The Parliament of Tanzania has 20 Committees, comprising three Housekeeping Committees responsible for matters relating to the operations and decorum of the House, eleven Sectoral Committees, four Cross-Cutting Committees and two Oversight Committees.

Our committee system is supported by dedicated committee periods, normally scheduled for two weeks preceding each plenary session of Parliament. With four parliamentary sessions in a year, committees therefore have at least two weeks of dedicated committee work during each session. This arrangement provides Members with dedicated time to undertake detailed scrutiny and engage with stakeholders before matters are brought before the House.

Adapting to a Changing Environment
Like every Parliament represented in this room, the Parliament of Tanzania operates in an environment of rapid and continuous change. We are responding to evolving expectations from citizens, technological transformation, increasing demands for transparency and public participation, and the need to make parliamentary information more accessible.

In response to these developments, the Parliament of Tanzania has embraced digital transformation in the conduct of its business. Parliament now operates largely on a paperless basis through our e-Parliament system, known as Bunge Mtandao, which provides Members with electronic access to parliamentary documents and facilitates the conduct of parliamentary business.

We have also expanded public access to parliamentary proceedings. Plenary sittings are broadcast through Bunge TV and made accessible through social media platforms, enabling citizens across the country and beyond to follow the work of their Parliament.

At the same time, our parliamentary galleries remain open to members of the public who wish to observe proceedings in person. We have seen growing public interest in visiting Parliament, particularly among students, who come not only to observe the proceedings but also to gain a better understanding of how their Parliament works. We regard this engagement as an important part of bringing Parliament closer to the people it represents.

These developments reflect our continuing efforts to make Parliament more accessible, transparent and responsive, while taking advantage of technology to improve the way parliamentary business is conducted.
At the same time, we recognise that no Parliament has all the answers. Our approach is therefore to learn from the experience of others, adapt good practices to our own institutional context, and share our own experiences where they may be of value to fellow Parliaments.

From Tanzania to the ASGP Community
As we look at the different parliamentary systems represented in this room, we are reminded that there is no single model of a successful Parliament. Some of you operate bicameral systems, others, like Tanzania, have a unicameral national legislature.

Some Parliaments have evolved from Westminster traditions, others have developed different constitutional arrangements.

Some have focused heavily on oversight, public participation, institutional memory or staff development, while others are dealing with rapid digital transformation. This diversity is precisely what makes the ASGP so valuable.
We come together not to determine which parliamentary system is best, but to understand what works, why it works, and what lessons may be adapted to our own institutions. THAT, IN MY VIEW, IS THE REAL STRENGTH OF THE ASGP.

Closing
Let me conclude by once again welcoming you to Tanzania.
We hope that during these few days in Arusha, we shall not only discuss parliamentary administration, but also build relationships, exchange practical experiences and perhaps take home a few ideas that will make our respective Parliaments stronger.

And, equally importantly, we hope that you will take away good memories of Tanzania; its people, its hospitality and its remarkable natural heritage.
On behalf of the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, I wish you a very productive and enjoyable ASGP session.

Karibuni sana Arusha. *Karibuni sana Tanzania*. Thank you.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, expressed his thanks and offered Mr Leonard a present on behalf of the Association.

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

7. Communication: Mr Eric Janse, House of Commons of Canada on 'Strategic Internal Assessment of Operations (SIAO)'

My name is Eric Janse and I am the Clerk of the House of Commons.

I have unfortunately missed the last few ASGP meetings as they conflicted with sittings of our House, so it is a real pleasure to be back here amongst colleagues.

I would like to speak to you about an ongoing initiative to enhance efficiency and sustainability in parliamentary service delivery.

Rehabilitation of Centre Block

As you may know, our main Parliament building, where resides the House of Commons, the Senate and the Library of Parliament, is undergoing a major renovation and restoration exercise.

Temporary Chamber in West Block

As we are improving physically, we are also aiming to improve operationally and financially.

Context

In 2024, with expenditure reviews underway across the federal public service and anticipating a potential change in government, we recognized that the House could face a Strategic Operating Review, or SOR, as had happened in the past.

These exercises can sometimes become largely across-the-board cost-cutting exercises, without sufficient consideration of the different impacts on organizations or services. Rather than wait for that possibility, the House Administration proactively developed

SIAO (or Strategic Internal Assessment of Operations) as a multi-year framework to align our operations with the evolving needs of Members while sustaining service excellence.

The Board of Internal Economy, our governing body, endorsed SIAO in December 2024 and approved a Subcommittee, chaired by the Speaker and including one Member from each recognized party represented on the Board, to provide direction and oversight.

Following prorogation and dissolution, the Subcommittee was confirmed in June 2025 and held its first meeting in October.

For context, the House budget is $625.5 million, with approximately 60% allocated to Members and 40% to the Administration. Over the past ten years, the Public Service budget has grown by about 40%, compared with 17.1% for the House.

When we were asked to consider cost reductions, we first clarified whether Member budgets would be included. We were ultimately instructed not to touch Member budgets or security-related funding, and proposed a 5% reduction to the Administration budget over three years.

This cost-reduction exercise is separate from, but parallel to SIAO, which is focused on longer-term efficiencies and improvements.

SIAO Framework

The SIAO framework is built around four strategic pillars:

- Strengthening governance structures;
- Promoting stewardship and accountability;
- Advancing operational efficiency; and
- Enhancing risk management.

These pillars bring together existing initiatives and new activities over the next three years, with the overall objective of strengthening service delivery, improving efficiency and keeping Members' needs at the centre of our decisions.

A key principle is clear accountability. Service area heads remain accountable for the services they deliver and the recommendations they bring forward, while our corporate governance bodies provide strategic oversight and approval where appropriate.

These four pillars are supported by five key enablers, which I'll walk through next.

Five Enablers

The five enablers are our people, the service catalogue, performance metrics, benchmarking, and service reviews.

Together, they provide the foundation for a more structured and evidence-based approach to managing our services.

They help us understand what we do, what it costs, how it is being used and delivered, and where there may be opportunities to improve.

Our People

The first enabler is Our People.

SIAO is not just about systems and structures. It is also about creating the conditions for our employees to succeed and supporting a healthy workforce.

Three areas are particularly important.

First, service standards, which clarify expectations and priorities and help employees balance service excellence with capacity and well-being.

Second, reducing silos, by encouraging greater sharing of knowledge and expertise.

And third, cross-functional collaboration, which promotes shared responsibility and a stronger sense of connection across the organization.

Service Catalogue

The service catalogue is another key enabler because it creates a shared understanding of what we do as an organization.

It provides greater transparency around what services we offer, what is included, and what those services cost.

Having better visibility into costs and service usage allows us to make more informed decisions and understand the trade-offs associated with those decisions.

The catalogue covers services provided to Members, the House Administration and external partners. Over time, it will provide a common structure for managing and evaluating our services and help improve the client experience.

Most importantly, it will allow us to have more informed conversations with our clients. If there is a desire to change a service, we can clearly articulate the implications and potential savings.

For example, reducing cafeteria hours during late sittings could generate savings, but it would obviously affect the service offering.

Service Catalogue Process

Developing the catalogue has been a significant collaborative effort.

We asked Administration sectors to identify their services and group them into proposed categories. This initially resulted in more than 500 services and 100 categories.

A core team of service representatives then worked to rationalize this information; grouping similar services, identifying gaps and duplicates, and creating categories that make sense from a client perspective.

Through this process, the inventory was consolidated into 33 service categories, providing a much clearer picture of the full range of services we deliver to Members, their staff, the Administration and external partners.

In parallel, Finance Services worked with service areas to develop a costing methodology that accounts for 100% of employee time across all levels.

The result is not simply an inventory. It is the foundation for understanding our services, their costs and their usage, and ultimately for having evidence-based conversations about priorities, service levels and potential efficiencies.

Metrics

The next enabler is metrics. This is about ensuring our decisions are based on evidence.

One of the first things we are measuring is the cost of our services, using the service catalogue, along with service usage and demand over time.

This will allow us to respond more accurately when Members ask about the full cost of services, such as Committees or Chamber operations, because the necessary information will already be available.

The goal is not to measure everything. It is to measure the right things so we understand what is actually happening rather than relying on assumptions.

These measures are also about understanding services and demand - not monitoring individual performance.

For example, by measuring how well we meet our service standards, we can identify successes, communicate more clearly with clients and determine where improvements may be needed.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking allows us to compare how we deliver services with similar organizations while recognizing the unique context in which the House operates.

We are a bilingual parliamentary institution serving parliamentarians, so comparisons need to be meaningful and take those realities into account.

Benchmarking helps us move beyond assumptions and identify both areas where we are performing well and practices that could improve efficiency.

For example, looking at Parliamentary Publications, we can compare timelines, bilingual production requirements and quality assurance processes with other parliamentary institutions.

The objective is not simply to replicate what others do, but to identify practices or tools that could improve our own service delivery.

Benchmarking Process

To support the benchmarking exercise, an external firm analyzed quantitative data for each service category, including costs, FTE resources and service volumes.

But the numbers only tell part of the story.

We therefore also interviewed people responsible for delivering four service categories to understand the operational context behind the data, including their structures, strategic priorities, performance practices and day-to-day realities.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative information gives us a more complete picture of service delivery and provides a stronger foundation for future performance measurement and continuous improvement.

Service Reviews

The final enabler is service reviews.

The objective is to improve how services are delivered, not to question whether the services themselves are important.

Service reviews help us determine whether services are aligned with demand, capacity and expectations, and whether we are getting appropriate value from the resources invested.

One example is the review requested by the SIAO Subcommittee of the funding model for joint Senate-House activities.

We analyzed participation levels, activities and associated costs, and examined alternative funding models and their operational implications.

Our analysis ultimately supported maintaining the current approach because changing it would not generate the anticipated benefits or efficiencies. The Members agreed.

This is a good example of how SIAO supports evidence-based decision-making: we were able to examine the issue objectively, provide Members with the relevant information and make a recommendation based on the evidence.

Lessons Learned

Year 1 has also given us some important lessons.

First, change management matters. Introducing new ways of working takes time, communication and engagement, and we are applying those lessons to Year 2.

Second, we need clearer service definitions and better alignment between financial objectives and operational realities. This is essential to making informed decisions about how services are delivered.

Finally, good information takes time to build. We have made significant progress in understanding our services, costs and volumes, but this is an ongoing journey.

Operational excellence is not a one-time exercise. It needs to become part of how we manage and continuously improve our services.

Why It Matters

So, ultimately, why does SIAO matter?

It gives us a shared understanding of our operations: what services we provide, what they cost, how they are used and where there may be opportunities to improve.

It increases transparency around how resources are allocated, clarifies roles and expectations, and gives Members and the Administration a stronger evidence base for making decisions.

It also puts service quality and the client experience at the centre of our operational decision-making. By better understanding demand, costs and performance, we can anticipate needs, manage resources responsibly and make informed choices about service levels and priorities.

And importantly, SIAO is not about reducing services for the sake of reducing costs. It is about ensuring that the services we provide are sustainable, efficient and aligned with the needs of Members.

Ultimately, this work will help us continuously improve how we operate, strengthen our reputation for service excellence and continue to earn the trust of our clients every day.

Conclusion

I thank you for your attention and look forward to hearing how some of you have perhaps also been undertaking expenditure review exercises.

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, said similar reviews were occurring in Westminster, she enquired about the benchmarking process. In particular, publication timelines for the reports. In Westminster, she said the areas of biggest expenditure are the World Heritage building, security precautions, digital infrastructure and ongoing maintenance. She said they are finding it difficult to benchmark some of these

factors usefully. She asked how Canada has balanced the unique challenges of parliament while trying to learn from other external organisations?

Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland, asked about the service catalogue, and enquired whether MPs are involved in defining the service catalogue. In Switzerland, he said they had put the service catalogue to Members to ensure it met their needs. He asked how this was ensured in Canada?

Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia, asked to what extent, architecturally, is the temporary location of the chamber influencing the decisions around service provision. She noted they are conducting the review now, while in the temporary location, but in the not-too-distant future they will return to the buildings and she wondered whether they may feel requirements are different.

Mr Kyme Grimstad, Norway, asked how many parliamentary services the Canadians were able to find meaningful benchmarks for? He also asked whether internal or external auditors were used for the project.

Mr Benvenido Ekua Eona, Equatorial Guinea, said this is exactly what his chamber is trying to improve, he asked how the Canadians will use the report on benchmarking?

Mr Eric Janse, Canada, replied on benchmarking that it is a big challenge. He said they used an international and highly reputable consulting form with a large database of different organisations, not just parliamentary organisations. They looked at other organisations with 2,000 plus employees and asked questions like, how big is there IT department and how many HR personnel do these organisations have. However, to compare apples with apples, they also asked the consultants to get in touch with other parliaments and undertake the same type of service level benchmarking.

In response to Switzerland, he said they have only just finalised the service catalogue, it will be presented to MPs on a sub-committee on which all parties are represented. Members will get to influence the catalogue at the next step.

In response to Australia, regarding the architectural influence of the current building, he said the services before, during and after the move will benefit from the review process and he hopes very much to avoid re-starting the process when they move back to the in to the other building.

In response to Norway, he said benchmarking was a very large and time consuming exercise. Getting the auditors to look at both large organisations and parliamentary bodies was key. He said they have benchmarked 33 of their services

and are getting reports back from the consultants in batches, they have the first report on four services which they are currently digesting.

In response to Equatorial Guinea, he said they have just received a very heavy report from the consultants and are deciding what to do next. His team is analysing the recommendations to decide what can be done in the short term, medium term and long term.

8. Communication: Mr Kim Sangsoo, National Assembly of Korea on 'The National Assembly in the Age of AI'

Good afternoon, Secretaries General from around the world and distinguished guests. My name is Kim SangSoo, and I am Deputy Secretary General of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.

I believe we can all agree that AI will bring profound changes to the functions and working methods of parliaments in the years ahead.

AI can serve as a new form of legislative infrastructure—one that enables lawmakers and staff to analyze greater volumes of information, allows staff to devote themselves to specialized areas such as complex legal assessments and the development of policy alternatives, and makes parliamentary information more readily accessible to the public. I believe four areas are of particular importance as parliaments move into the age of AI.

First, AI can strengthen legislative support capabilities.
AI can comprehensively connect existing laws, similar bills, past parliamentary debates, and domestic and international policy cases and research materials related to specific policies or bills across the vast amounts of legislative data. In doing so, it can effectively provide lawmakers and staff with the information they need to review bills as well as budget and final account proposals.

Second, AI can enhance the capacity to oversee and supervise the executive branch. By analyzing materials submitted by governments, budget and final account data, past parliamentary responses, and policy documents, AI can rapidly identify policy changes, discrepancies between data sets, and anomalies in budget execution. This can help address the information asymmetry between the parliament and the executive branch and strengthen the parliament's essential function of monitoring and checking the executive branch.

Third, AI can bridge the information gap between the public and the parliament.

Although the parliament makes an enormous amount of information publicly available, it is not easy for citizens to directly find and understand the information they seek.

If AI can explain complex legislative bills and parliamentary activities in ways that are accessible to the public, and help citizens find the parliamentary information they need through natural-language queries, it can significantly enhance public access to parliamentary information. Furthermore, by broadening public understanding of and participation in parliamentary activities, AI can contribute to the advancement of parliamentary democracy.

Fourth, AI must ensure the reliability of information.
Generative AI is an extraordinarily useful technology, but it also carries the risk of generating inaccurate information. Therefore, AI used by the parliament, which deals with laws and policies, must be grounded in reliable parliamentary data and designed to enable users to verify the sources underlying its responses. In this way, we can enhance both accuracy and verifiability.

Today, from this perspective, I would like to discuss the current state of AI utilization in the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, our future plans for AI transformation, and the role of the National Assembly Secretariat in the age of AI.

Main Topic 1: The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea's AI Legislative Support Platform

The National Assembly is a knowledge-intensive institution that comprehensively handles a vast array of bills, policy documents, meeting minutes, budget materials, research reports, and public opinions. Therefore, our ability to analyze and make effective use of this enormous volume of information, both swiftly and accurately, is directly linked to the quality of our legislative activities.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea has continuously pursued digital transformation, even before the advent of AI. A wide range of legislative tasks—including lawmakers' requests for draft bills, the drafting and submission of bills, requests for and responses to legislative research from National Assembly-affiliated agencies, and requests for and submission of materials to the executive branch—are already carried out through digital information systems.

Furthermore, the National Assembly has established an environment in which the full texts of laws and regulations, their amendment histories, and the progress of legislative bill reviews can be electronically searched and utilized.

If this digital transformation has represented a phase in which operations were computerized and information was accumulated, AI transformation can be described as a phase in which the data accumulated to date are understood, connected, analyzed, and transformed into new knowledge.

Since 2024, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea has been planning to enhance legislative support through dedicated generative AI technology. As a result, in April 2026, the National Assembly AI Legislative Support Platform was officially launched, and it is already providing services to approximately 5,000 members of the National Assembly, including lawmakers and staff of the National Assembly Secretariat.

The National Assembly AI Legislative Support Platform combines generative AI with the National Assembly's vast data sets to provide legislative support services, including data search and analysis, document drafting, and summarization. The National Assembly's big data is built not only from internal National Assembly materials but also from data produced by over 320 organizations.

Above all, reliability and security were the key considerations in developing the National Assembly AI Legislative Support Platform.

By ensuring that generative AI provides answers based not only on the knowledge it has independently learned but also on data drawn from the National Assembly's big data repository, the platform reduces the chronic risk of AI hallucinations. At the same time, it enhances the reliability of its responses by enabling users to verify the sources and original texts of the National Assembly's big data on which those responses are based.

Furthermore, the generative AI technology implemented in the National Assembly AI Legislative Support Platform is designed so that the AI does not learn from conversations with users or from uploaded materials. It is only deployed on-premises within the National Assembly Secretariat's data center, thereby preventing data leakage at its source.

The National Assembly AI Legislative Support Platform provides three main functions.

First, it serves as an AI Assistant. It answers questions concerning National Assembly operations and policies and provides customized support for tasks such as drafting various documents and summarizing materials.

Second, it offers Intelligent Search. It enables users to search for relevant materials within the National Assembly's big data using natural language. This represents a significant change aimed at making more efficient use of legislative materials, as well as public and academic resources, which were previously dispersed both within and outside the National Assembly.

Third, it acts as a legislative bill service. It supports the review and drafting of bills by recommending bills with similar justifications or provisions with similar content.

While major parliaments around the world are actively adopting generative AI and developing AI tailored to legislative needs, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea stands as one of the world's leading examples of parliamentary AI transformation, having implemented a generative AI service based on its own data across the entire institution and using its own infrastructure.

Main Topic 2: Future Plans for the National Assembly's AI Transformation

Next, I would like to discuss the future plans for the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea's AI transformation.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea has been a pioneer in applying AI technology across various fields, including the establishment of the National Assembly AI Legislative Support Platform and the provision of real-time captioning services through the application of AI speech-recognition technology to the legislation webcast system, which live-streams National Assembly sessions online.

Speaker Cho Jeong-sik selected "A National Assembly Opening the Future Together with the People" as the slogan for the second half of the 22nd National Assembly and proposed "the National Assembly's AI Transformation" as an agenda item for this future-oriented Assembly. Accordingly, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea intends to establish a roadmap for its AI transformation from a more comprehensive and mid- to long-term perspective.

The National Assembly's AI Transformation Roadmap will include multifaceted plans to utilize AI technology to enhance the efficiency and productivity of its legislative activities, as well as plans to develop AI-based public services to increase citizens' participation in the legislative process. It will also include measures to lay the groundwork for the sustained advancement of the National Assembly's AI transformation, including related education and expanded data distribution in open formats.

We plan to upgrade the language model of the National Assembly AI Legislative Support Platform, which is currently in operation, and refine the structure of the National Assembly's big data in order to continuously improve the quality of its responses.

We also plan to develop a dedicated meeting-minutes application for the National Assembly, tailored to various parliamentary sessions, based on the AI speech-recognition technology currently used in the real-time captioning service of the legislation webcast system.

In particular, we plan to begin building AI services for the public starting in 2027.

Another major goal of the National Assembly's AI transformation is to reduce the distance between the public and the National Assembly. To do this, we plan to focus on providing AI-based services that help the public understand complex legislative information easily and quickly. We also seek to create a service environment that remains stable even when a large number of citizens access it simultaneously.

Main Topic 3: The National Assembly Secretariat and AI-Based Innovation in Legislative Support

In driving the National Assembly's innovative AI transformation, I would like to emphasize the role of the National Assembly Secretariat.

The National Assembly Secretariat is not merely an administrative support agency. It is the institution that underpins the National Assembly's core legislative activities, including the operation of plenary sessions and committees, support for the drafting and review of bills, assistance in the review of budgets and final accounts, the recording of meetings, and the operation of information systems.

Therefore, for AI to bring about tangible change in the National Assembly, the operations of the Secretariat must be closely integrated with AI.

First, the National Assembly Secretariat must evolve beyond its role of managing information systems and become a data-driven organization that actively structures and manages the National Assembly's knowledge.

Ultimately, the performance of AI is greatly influenced by the quality of its data. It is therefore necessary to standardize data formats and criteria so that the National Assembly's vast knowledge assets—including bills, meeting minutes, various reports, and legislative materials—can be interconnected, while continuously ensuring their accuracy and timeliness.

Furthermore, the National Assembly Secretariat must utilize AI to enhance the efficiency of legislative support tasks and create a work environment in which staff can devote themselves to specialized duties.

The work system and roles must be redesigned so that AI is actively utilized for repetitive and simple tasks—such as searching for information, summarizing and comparing documents, and drafting documents—while National Assembly staff devote more of their capabilities to tasks requiring expertise and responsible judgment, such as policy review, legal assessment, issue analysis, and the development of policy alternatives.

Finally, the National Assembly Secretariat must play a role in establishing standards for trustworthy parliamentary AI.

The Secretariat must not only adopt the technology but also develop AI governance frameworks covering usage standards, data management, security, verification of results, and accountability. Standards must be established to uphold the human-in-the-loop principle, whereby humans verify and take responsibility for the data sources and methods used to generate results in critical policy decisions.

Conclusion

I believe that as AI advances, the role of the parliament will not diminish but become even more important. While AI can search for and analyze information, it cannot decide what kind of society we should build. The task of reconciling the interests of the people and bearing political responsibility ultimately remains with the democratically elected parliament and with human beings.

Therefore, the direction the parliament should pursue in the age of AI is clear.
A parliament that makes better decisions by harnessing the power of AI.
A parliament in which AI strengthens human judgment and expertise.

And a parliament that shares its accumulated knowledge more fully with the public and with other parliaments around the world. Parliaments around the world are grappling with similar challenges.

The issue of securing training data for the development of parliament-specific AI, the challenge of minimizing hallucinations and overcoming bias in generative AI, and the risk of leaks involving personal information or sensitive parliamentary data that may occur in the course of using generative AI are not problems unique to any one parliament. Therefore, it is necessary for parliaments around the world to share

their AI use cases and technical expertise, interconnect publicly available parliamentary data, and jointly discuss principles concerning the reliability and ethics of parliamentary AI.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea also looks forward to sharing its experiences with you, learning from the experiences of peer parliaments around the world, and creating a new model of parliamentary cooperation essential to the age of AI. Thank you for your attention.

Ms Sarah Davies, UK, emphasised the responsibility of parliamentary administrations in the development of artificial intelligence, considering that they should play a leading role in this field. She indicated that it was particularly interesting to learn about the solutions implemented by the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.

She asked whether the latter used open-source MCP solutions, which are currently being tested in the United Kingdom. She also wished to know how the parliamentary administration worked with parliamentarians or the governing bodies of Parliament in order to understand their uses of artificial intelligence. She asked how the actions implemented in the field of artificial intelligence were evaluated.

Finally, she enquired about the relationships between the Parliament of the Republic of Korea and external companies or service providers. She indicated that, in the United Kingdom, Parliament was approached by numerous companies offering artificial intelligence services, some of which were very expensive. She considered that ASGP members could in future strengthen their cooperation in order to exchange their experiences on these issues rather than relying on external service providers.

Mr Andrés Salas, Chile asked to what extent the use of artificial intelligence had had an impact on the transparency of information, particularly with regard to costs. He wished to know how the financial impact of artificial intelligence solutions was assessed.

Ms Melissa English, Ireland, asked whether artificial intelligence was being used to draft bills or whether their drafting remained exclusively the responsibility of individuals.

Dr Georg Kleeman, Germany, noted that artificial intelligence was a topic of common interest to all parliaments. Following on from the call for proposals launched by the President at the beginning of the meeting for the themes of future

sessions, he proposed devoting a future debate to the practical artificial intelligence solutions implemented within parliaments.

Mr Arsha Jenje, Zimbabwe, stated that many consultants offered their services to parliaments, even though they sometimes already possessed the necessary expertise in-house. He cited the example of a young parliamentarian in his country who had developed an application enabling Parliament's data to be backed up.

He considered that parliaments sometimes experienced difficulties in precisely defining their needs and that more thorough work should be undertaken upstream to determine the expertise they already possessed internally and that which they needed to seek externally. He added that the exchange of experiences and expertise between parliaments could constitute part of the solution to these difficulties.

Mr Kim Sangsoo, Korea, noted the strong interest generated by issues relating to artificial intelligence within the Association. He indicated that artificial intelligence was now widely used in the Republic of Korea, not only in Parliament but also in public administrations more generally.

In response to the question from the United Kingdom, he specified that the National Assembly was working in collaboration with Samsung Electronics. He explained that machine learning required models to be trained on very large quantities of data and therefore required substantial investment.

He indicated that an artificial intelligence model had been developed in-house. He emphasised that the data were kept on-site and anonymised in order to ensure their protection and prevent their disclosure outside the organisation. He added that processing such large volumes of data represented a significant cost.

In response to the question from Ireland, he indicated that artificial intelligence could, in particular, be used to prepare initial drafts of bills. He specified that the National Assembly was considering expanding these uses, while carefully examining their advantages and disadvantages. He considered that the introduction of the artificial intelligence platform would lead to changes in the functions carried out by the Secretariat and, more broadly, by the services of the National Assembly.

In response to Germany, he expressed support for organising an exchange dedicated to the practical artificial intelligence solutions implemented within different parliaments.

Finally, in response to Zimbabwe, he specified that the system currently in use was not accessible to the public, although it had been developed in the public interest.

He added that consideration could be given in the future to ways of making some of these solutions accessible to the public.

9. Communication: Ms Claressa Surtees, Australian House of Representatives, on 'Parliamentary engagement with young Australians: inaugural National Youth Parliament'

Ms Claressa Surtees presented the following communication:

At the Parliament of Australia, each of the four parliamentary departments plays a role in the Parliament's engagement with the community in the interests of promoting parliamentary democracy. In relation to parliamentary engagement with young Australians, several formal programs contribute to this engagement, the first commenced in 1993 and the most recent of which is the National Youth Parliament conducted for the first time in 2026. The Department of the House of Representatives has prime carriage of all but one of the measures mentioned below. In relation to the first measure, there is a shared responsibility for this program. Brief overviews of each measure follow.

1. Australian National Internship Program (ANIP)

The Australian National Internship Program commenced in 1993 under a formal agreement between the Presiding Officers and the Vice Chancellor of the Australian National University. It is an annual program open to students enrolled at the Australian National University to have an internship placement of some 10 weeks in an office of the Parliament, typically with a Member or Senator, as part of their formal course of study. The program provides the students with an opportunity to perform applied policy work to complement their academic studies through first-hand experience of the complexities of parliamentary government in Australia.

2. Parliamentary Assistants Program

The Parliamentary Assistants Program commenced in 2000. It is an annual program, open to students attending university and resident in Canberra, for part-time employment in the Department of the House of Representatives to promote understanding and engagement with the work of the Parliament. Parliamentary assistants perform the duties of attendants in the two House chambers, committee rooms, and more broadly in Parliament House.

3. My First Speech competition

The My First Speech competition commenced in 2011. It is an annual competition to engage young Australians with the Parliament through an open invitation to students in Years 10-12 to assume the role of a newly elected Member of the House of Representatives and compose and record a 'first' speech on an issue of importance to them. Three winners, one from each year group, receive paid travel and accommodation to come to Canberra to attend Parliament to deliver the speech and engage in a program of activities, including with Members.

4. Speaker's Lecture

The Speaker's Lecture commenced in 2018. It is an annual event typically, with a senior political journalist using the lecture to reflect on an aspect of Australia's parliamentary and political environment, for example, the first lecture was delivered in the year of the 30th anniversary of the opening of the first permanent home for the Parliament of Australia. However, in 2025, the Speaker selected a young person working in 'new media' to deliver the lecture and she addressed the prospects for civic institutions to engage the young generation. So, while this series is not dedicated to engagement with young people, the need to collaborate with young people is an active consideration in choosing who to invite to deliver the lecture and the topic proposed.

5. Yarning competition

The Yarning competition commenced in 2025. It is an annual competition for First Nations' students in Years 7-12. The name, Yarning, borrows from the language used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to refer to their storytelling about their lived experiences as First Nations Australians. The competition invites Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to share their individual story with Parliament through the creation of an artwork in the medium of their choice. The aim is to foster deeper connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and the work of the Parliament, encouraging students to engage with and learn about how the Parliament represents them. All competition entries are displayed on the Parliament's website. Three winners, one from each year group (Years 7/8, 9/10 and 11/12) receive paid travel and accommodation to come to Canberra to attend Parliament to celebrate their contribution and engage in a program of activities, including with Members. The winners' works are exhibited at Parliament House.

6. National Youth Parliament

The inaugural National Youth Parliament was held in August this year, 2026. The National Youth Parliament was comprised of 150 high school students of 16 and 17 years of age, selected to represent each federal electorate across Australia to participate in a five-day program in Canberra, including at Parliament House and Old Parliament House. Youth Members had a unique opportunity to learn about aspects of being a Member of Parliament, including the process by which bills are drafted, considered, and pass Parliament to become law. In their own chamber, Youth Members debated two bills drafted especially for the Youth Parliament, and participated in adjournment debate raising matters of their own choosing. Sitting Members of the House of Representatives were able to attend in the galleries to observe proceedings.

Practically, as a new initiative, the Department of the House of Representatives had neither the existing funding nor staffing expertise to deliver the project. The department had to seek funding from government, then engage in an open tender process to identify a service provider with the knowledge and ability for such a relatively large undertaking, with whom the department could partner and together deliver a successful project.

A review of this first National Youth Parliament is being conducted to help determine whether a Youth Parliament might become a permanent feature of the House of Representatives suite of programs whereby the Parliament engages with young Australians and they can learn directly from parliamentarians about Australia's parliamentary democracy.

For the curious, further details are available on the Parliament's website for each of the programs outlined above www.aph.gov.au

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, observed it was a fantastic initiative and invited questions from the floor.

Ms Sarah Davies, UK, noted the work of the interns alongside the youth parliament. With regards to the interns, she noted it is young people from across Australia and observed in the UK, they have found that interns require a lot of support if they are living away from home for the first time. She enquired how Australia avoided the 'usual suspects' and sought a diverse group of young people from across Australia, also how were they supported.

She said the UK Youth Parliament has run for many years but the Government has recently cut the funding, it is currently supported by a charity and Parliament is considering its future funding.

Mr Eric Janse, Canada, also asked about the interns programme, he said in Canada they have a year long exercise where an intern will spend half a year each with a Government and Opposition member. He asked how long the internship programme is in Australia and whether it is with one member or several?

Mr Masibulele XASO, South Africa, noted there is both a youth and womens parliament in South Africa which discuss government policy on these areas. He asked what topics the youth parliament discuss in Australia? Also, if there are any recommendations from the youth parliament, what is done with them?

Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia, replied that the internship programme is managed jointly with the Australian National University, the interns are enrolled with the university who bear some responsibility for pastoral care. While in the parliamentary buildings, interns can call on the parliamentary support and wellbeing services. In response to the UK, she said the interns are self-selecting as they must apply, getting a balanced group is not the responsibility of the parliament. What the parliament does decide is how many parliamentarians are available to take on an intern. The programme is for one semester with each parliamentarian. During this time, they are sponsored by the parliamentarian who supports the drafting of the final paper.

In terms of funding, she said there is no issue with the internship programme. With the youth parliament, they are doing a review of this first youth parliament under governance requirements. The project must be assessed for value for money against its objectives. Whether the youth parliament is done again will depend on the outcome of the review. She said some people were initially sceptical but, at the end, everyone really enjoyed the experience and there is a strong ground swell of support for continuing the youth parliament. She said getting a funding commitment to hold a youth parliament at least once in each 3-year term will be the initial goal.

In response to South Africa, she said they discussed topics related to young people and the draft bills put in front of them were on youth issues. Participants had to argue for and against whether these pieces of legislation should be introduced as an exercise and they were given research materials to prepare speeches. With regards the outcome, she said she hopes parliamentary committees take forward some of the topics debated in the youth parliament. In terms of women, she said Australia does not have a similar approach to South Africa but female representation in Australian Parliament is growing. There is over 50% female representation in the Australian Senate, where the selection process is managed by the parties who each take a different approach. In the House of Representatives, they do not have 50% female representation, it's about 40% at present. There is a female Governor General and one of the two Presiding Officers is female. The Prime Minister is male.

10. Concluding remarks

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, thanked all the speakers and reminded colleagues to gather for the group photo. He closed the sitting and reminded colleagues that the next sitting of the Association would start at 2.30 this afternoon.

THE SITTING ENDED AT 13:05

SECOND SITTING

Wednesday 7 October 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. Presentation on recent projects undertaken by the IPU, Ms Anda Filip, Secretary General of the IPU

Ms Anda Filip, Secretary General of the IPU, spoke as follows:

I am delighted to be here today, I hope this will be more of an interactive exchange. I am deeply appreciative of the longstanding cooperation between the ASGP and the IPU over the years, much of the success for implementing the new IPU strategy will depend on contributions from and engagement with members of the ASGP.

The new IPU strategy will become operational from January 2027. The AI workstream is a key part of the strategy and there have been major developments since May. It is shocking that we have already had cases of AI systems going rogue. In July, the IPU hosted a series of events on AI and decided to join the global call against extreme AI risks such as weapon creation. There is a convergence of great powers on this issue and parliament's must be equipped to participate in decision-making. It cannot be left to the entrepreneurs creating this technology to set the rules or direction on this critically important issue. We need to create a common baseline of institutional understanding, and common understanding at Member level, about what AI means and develop democratic governance. The IPU has been talking to its opposite numbers in the United Nations and drawing on experiences from national parliaments who are advanced in the use of AI, such as the UK.

At the IPU, we would also like to rely on ASGP support to improve the impact of our work. There is so much noise in the public forum. In my own country, the military and the church are above parliament in the list of institutions which the public trust and listen to. Collectively we are doing good work, but it is not

sufficiently well understood by the public what parliament's do. Consequently, the IPU is stepping up its social media work and trying to spotlight the people who make change in our democratic institutions.
In the IPU statutes, there is a requirement for members to follow up on recommendation implementation after each conferences. However, in recognition of the burden this can place on members to report annually, the new approach is that every year only 40 countries will be expected to report. The response rate was 80% this year under the new model. The reports can be found on the website. They are an opportunity for members to share the good work they have done. For example, in Tashkent there was a debate on the situation in Gaza, the MP from the UK who was part of the negotiations at the IPU went back to his home parliament and raised awareness of the issue. I visited the UK two-weeks ago and the new Prime Minister made an announcement on the issue of Gaza. This is impact. Youth participation is another example of impact from IPU ideas as more national parliaments are adopting new ways to hear the voices of young people.

To build on this momentum, I hope the ASGP and IPU work together to collect best practice and good results. The IPU generally writes to the IPU delegation lead of each national parliament to ask for reports on progress but, these requests can easily get lost in other priorities, perhaps Secretaries Generals would be able to communicate directly with the IPU? We would benefit from hearing about new developments in your countries. The IPU is also trying to communicate better with its members, we have 40,000 member contacts in our database. At each Assembly, there are around 700 MPs but its important our good work reaches the rest of the MPs in national parliaments, not just those who attend. National parliaments take very different approaches to reporting back on the work of the IPU; some delegations submit a full report with recommendations to their parliament, some make a short statement in the chamber and in some countries the outcomes are just filed away, and nothing is done.

I want to conclude by inviting the world into our work at the IPU as much as I can. The IPU opens many of its online events to a much wider audience than can be present at conference, they are open to MPs and parliamentary officials from around the world. I want to encourage more participation of these events, it is very easy to provide interpretation into many languages with the digital platform. In terms of guidelines and toolkits, we have already developed a wealth of resources. At this assembly there will be a session on the next Global Parliamentary Report. With regards upcoming events, there is a full calendar but for you the event in Brussels, where there will be lots of professional staff from parliaments, would be particularly useful. Similarly, Uruguay is hosting a regional seminar on violence against women and gender sensitive parliaments which will be very impactful. Thank you again for your cooperation and I look forward to working with you.

3. Communication: Ms Kim Nagtzaam, Netherlands Senate on 'Best practice for the recruitment of parliamentary staff'

It is a privilege to speak with you today on behalf of the Netherlands. I will be presenting the recruitment policy of the Dutch Senate. In 2025, the Senate undertook a comprehensive modernization of its recruitment policy. The primary objectives of this initiative were to strengthen the quality of new hires, enhance the candidate experience, increase the objectivity of the selection process, and reduce the risk of mismatches between employees and roles. The revised approach is built around four interconnected pillars: employer branding, recruitment, selection, and onboarding.

- What is our desired position in the job market? Search process
- Where do we source talent, and how? Selection process
- What are our selection criteria, and how do we apply them? On boarding
- How do we want new team members to integrate?

Employer Branding

As a parliamentary institution, the Senate operates within a unique environment where independence, professionalism, and public service are at the heart of everything we do. To strengthen our position in the labour market, we have focused on both our internal identity and our external reputation as an employer.

Internally, we previously defined our core values and translated them into key competencies. These apply to all roles and are essential for success. The core competencies within the Senate are:
✓ Collaboration
✓ Flexibility
✓ Result-orientation

To

Strenghts	Opportunities
- Inspiring (political) environment - Small scale & personal atmosphere - Excellent employment conditions - Great work-life balance - Unique institution	- High level of interest from external candidates - Collaborations within the Hocosta network (High Council of State) - Government budget cuts (more candidates)
Weaknesses	**Threaths**
- Inward-looking workplace culture - Outdated recruitment methods - Uneven staff turnover (inflow/outflow) - Mixed public perception - Requirement for strict political neutrality	- Declining trust in public institutions - Shifting applicant demands (e.g., shorter tenure) - Highly competitive labour market

understand external position in the job market, we conducted a SWOT analysis using feedback from applicants and new hires.

We use these insights to guide our employer branding:
✓ We focus on the applicant's experience, not just our own demands.
✓ Our messaging is clear, welcoming, and concise rather than overly detailed.
✓ We blend text with photos, staff quotes, and personal stories.
✓ We tell the real story of working in a smaller organisation (pros and cons included).
✓ We highlight professional teamwork and personal growth, not just technical skills.
✓ Our communication is realistic and transparent.

SEARCH PROCESS

Every recruitment process begins with a comprehensive intake meeting between the hiring manager and Human Resources. All vacancies are published using a standardized format that combines inclusive language with visual content and authentic employee experiences. HR is owner of the vacancies format to maintain consistency and an external orientation (instead of an internal “list of demands”).

To attract sufficient attention, we utilize a wide range of recruitment channels (both government channels as professionals platforms). To easily connect with passive job seekers, we also offer the option of an informal coffee chat.

SELECTION PROCESS

Our selection process is designed to identify the most suitable candidate through a transparent, consistent approach. Candidates complete an online personality assessment and are evaluated against predefined selection criteria. The interviewers

use the assessment results to better probe into the examples provided by the candidate. Additionally, the results are used to gain a better understanding of team diversity.

Final-stage candidates complete a practical case study, followed by reference and screening checks. The first interview focuses on the cultural fit and the candidate's personality, while the second interview focuses on the technical job requirements.

ONBOARDING

We view onboarding as a critical factor in employee engagement, performance, and retention. Our onboarding programme is structured around the internationally recognized Five Cs framework: Compliance, Clarification, Culture, Connection, and Checkback.

1. Compliance (Managed by HR - Focus: Administration) Employment contracts, background checks (VOG), and compliance overviews.

2. Clarification (Managed by the Manager - Focus: The Role) Core duties, department context, manuals, and performance expectations.

3. Culture (Managed by the Manager - Focus: Identity) Our mission, organisational values, and workplace etiquette.

4. Connection (Managed by the Manager - Focus: Networking) Meeting attendance, team introductions, buddy matching, and social events.

5. Checkback (Managed by HR - Focus: Evaluation) Gathering feedback from new hires to share with management and the Works Council.

Mr Eric Janse, Canada, congratulated the speaker on the reform of the recruitment process. He wished to know whether there was a system allowing staff exchanges between the two chambers of Parliament, noting that this practice was not very common in Canada.

Mr Salim Djalal, Algeria, noted that Parliament was facing several recruitment challenges, including a decline in the attractiveness of public institutions. He asked what the reasons were for this trend.

Mr Ashe Jenje, Zimbabwe, wished to learn about Parliament’s experience with the use of personality tests as part of recruitment procedures. He noted that such tests were not always reliable and said that he would be interested in the speaker’s feedback on their use.

Mr Saïd Mokadem, Maghreb Consultative Council, wished to learn about Parliament's experience with the use of personality tests as part of recruitment procedures. He noted that such tests were not always reliable and said that he would be interested in the speaker's feedback on their use.

Ms Kim Nagtzaam, Netherlands, indicated that staff exchanges took place between the House of Representatives and the Senate. She specified that the two chambers wished to strengthen their cooperation, while emphasising that a certain degree of competition remained between them, despite good working relations.

With regard to the decline in the attractiveness of public institutions, she considered that it was due in particular to a decrease in trust in politicians and civil servants in the Netherlands. She said that she was concerned by this trend, which she had also observed in several other European countries.

Regarding the use of physical and psychological tests in recruitment procedures, she indicated that the experience had been mixed and that these tests constituted only one stage among others in the overall process. She added that, given the small size of the Senate administration, which employed around 80 staff members, recruitment was in some respects similar to that of a family business, in which the quality of social relations between colleagues was of particular importance.

As regards the status of state civil servants and parliamentary staff, she specified that there was no material or contractual difference between them and that the same legal rules applied to both groups.

Finally, with regard to staff reductions, she indicated that these concerned only the Government, as part of budgetary restrictions, and that they did not currently apply to Parliament.

4. Communication: Dr Gabriel Malebang, National Assembly of Botswana on 'Training for Members and parliamentary staff'

The Parliament of Botswana plays a central and indispensable role in the functioning of a democratic constitutional state, underpinned by a long-standing tradition of national stability and the foundational African socio-political tradition of *'Therisanyo'* (consultative culture). Established under Section 57 of the Constitution of Botswana, Parliament serves as the supreme legislative authority mandated to enact laws for the peace, order, and good government of Botswana.

Working in tandem with the legislative framework is the *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* (House of Chiefs). Established under Sections 77, 78, and 79 of the Constitution of Botswana, *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* functions as an essential advisory body to Parliament. Its core mandate is to advise the legislature on matters pertaining to national culture, land, and constitutional reforms.

By bringing traditional wisdom and cultural heritage directly into the legislative sphere, Ntlo ya Dikgosi forms a vital bridge between traditional leadership structures and the formal parliamentary system, ensuring that laws passed by the supreme authority remain deeply rooted in the cultural and societal realities of Botswana.

Through its constitutionally mandated legislative, oversight, representation and budget appropriation and scrutiny, Parliament provides a robust public forum where laws are thoroughly debated and considered, public financial resources are meticulously scrutinised, and the actions, policies, and expenditures of the Executive arm of Government are continuously held to account.

The overall effectiveness of the National Assembly, however, depends not only on the formal powers and structural privileges given to it by the Constitution of Botswana, but equally on the specialized knowledge, technical skills, and operational capacity of the people who work within the institution, particularly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) and the professional parliamentary staff. Within the unique socio-political context of Botswana, MPs arrive at the National Assembly with diverse professional backgrounds-ranging from experienced legal practitioners and corporate executives to traditional community leaders and civil servants.

However, winning an election and securing a legislative seat does not automatically provide them with the specialized technical knowledge and procedural acumen required to perform complex legislative duties. Elected members must be fully equipped to scrutinise intricate pieces of legislation, examine exhaustive national budgets, and actively participate in specialized portfolio committees.

Simultaneously, parliamentary staff provide the vital technical, administrative, procedural, and legal support needed for the House to carry out these multifaceted functions seamlessly. Consequently, continuous training and professional development are recognized as a fundamental strategic priority for the Office of the Clerk to ensure that both groups are adequately prepared for their respective roles.

It is important to note that the Parliament of Botswana does not operate a standalone, dedicated parliamentary training institute. Instead, institutional capacity building is centrally coordinated through the Human Resources Division and specialized administrative departments, leveraging a strategic combination of internal institutional expertise and collaborative external partnerships.

1. TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (MPS) AND NTLO YA DIKGOSI

MPs join the National Assembly with varied political and professional experience. A structured learning programme can establish a shared understanding of

parliamentary practice while helping Members apply their broad public mandate. Parliament increased its training capacity development through strategic partners and created opportunities through workshops and seminars as follows:

- **Parliamentary Committees:** Members took part in practical workshops and briefings on reviewing bills and policies before their formal legislative consideration.

- **Regional and international engagement:** Botswana delegations participated in bodies such as SADC-PF, the Pan-African Parliament, the IPU, and the CPA, offering scope for professional exchange and peer learning.

- **Specialised initiatives:** Parliament continued its engagement with the Bridging the Gap project, the Inter Pares Programme, and the SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) project.

- **Ntlo ya Dikgosi:** Members undertook learning on climate change, protocol, and gender-based violence.

- **Regional and international engagement:** Parliament and the Open Society Foundations jointly hosted a regional human rights conference.

This ongoing capacity-building initiative highlighted the need to continuously support MPs and Ntlo Ya Dikgosi. The programme delivered nineteen (19) capacity building sessions since November 2024 that focused on building practical knowledge and skill development as follows:

- **Legislative procedure and practice:** Developing familiarity with the National Assembly Standing Orders and the stages of a Bill; using motions and pre-legislative review as oversight tools; and applying effective scrutiny.
- **Budget scrutiny and financial oversight:** Building Members' ability to interpret and approve national budgets, development plans, and audit findings. The Budget Analysis Seminar held in February 2025, for example, strengthened Members' skills in tracking budget implementation and promoting financial accountability.

- **Oversight and committee work:** Preparing Members to undertake parliamentary inquiries and scrutinise Executive action.

- **Constituency engagement:** Strengthening Members' ability to identify local priorities and consult stakeholders in an organised and inclusive way. Botswana Speaks, for example, is intended to connect constituents with their elected representatives through dialogue and participatory governance.

- **Ethical leadership:** Supporting Members to observe the parliamentary Code of Conduct, national integrity requirements, and expected standards of professional behaviour.

MP training follows a blended, responsive approach. The parliamentary administration identifies emerging subjects for learning in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2063 and the 2036 National Vision. Members also raise specific training needs through the Selection Committee and portfolio committees, including the Public Accounts Committee, based on issues encountered in their legislative and oversight work.

2. TRAINING FOR PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

Parliamentary staff preserve institutional knowledge and help maintain the House's work across successive political terms. Their roles cover committee support, procedural guidance, legal drafting, library and research services, and corporate administration. Accordingly, staff development emphasises accuracy, political impartiality, and the ability to maintain services reliably.

Staff learning is linked to the duties set out in the national Public Service Scheme of Service. For example, procedural officers need continuing instruction in parliamentary rules and precedent, as well as the practical preparation of the daily Order Paper. The Parliamentary Services Department and Corporate Services Department provide the organisational basis for this development. Strengthening staff capability also helps retain essential knowledge when general elections bring political change, supporting continuity in Parliament's work.

Staff development was also included in the capacity-building programme covering MPs, Members of Ntlo ya Dikgosi and staff. Working with partners such as ITEC, BPSC, China, and India, Parliament secured 62 study opportunities and supported eight part-time private study opportunities.

Other staff development activities included:

- Nineteen (19) officers completed training through the French PACOP programme.
- Ten (10) officers received internal instruction on maintaining fixed-asset registers.
- Change-management training was delivered to the Executive (8), Senior Management (20), and Finance (10) teams, followed by a year-end capacity-building session for headquarters staff.

Taken together, these activities reflect Parliament's continuing efforts to develop its people and strengthen institutional performance and governance.

3. DELIVERY MECHANISMS AND COLLABORATION

Because Botswana has no dedicated national parliamentary training academy, Parliament uses a combination of delivery approaches:

- **In-house learning:** Senior procedural officers share their knowledge of parliamentary practice, institutional culture, and the Standing Orders with newly elected Members and junior staff.

- **Local providers:** Academic and professional bodies, including the Botswana Public Service College (BPSC) and the University of Botswana, are engaged to provide specialised instruction.

- **International cooperation:** Through membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum, Parliament draws on international networks for comparative learning, professional exchange, and institutional benchmarking.

- **Learning between parliaments:** Visits, including a benchmarking visit by a delegation from the Malawi Parliament, enable the exchange of experience in institutional development and administration.

4. CHALLENGES IN PARLIAMENTARY TRAINING

Despite ongoing administrative efforts, a number of practical and structural factors affect the planning and delivery of parliamentary training:

- **Membership Turnover:** General elections can bring substantial changes in parliamentary membership, requiring timely and resource-intensive induction for new MPs. Botswana's system, in which the Executive is drawn from Parliament, also creates particular demands for Members' understanding of their roles and responsibilities across the two arms of governance.

- **Contextual Relevance:** Guidance from external experts needs to be adapted to Botswana's constitutional arrangements, Standing Orders, and parliamentary circumstances so that training is applicable in practice.

- **Financial Constraints and Time:** Restricted budgets and demanding sessional schedules can limit how often training takes place and how long learning activities can run.

- **Human Resource Constraints:** Staff shortages and deployment pressures can disrupt the consistent planning and delivery of staff development. Dependence on seconded officers for some duties may lead to frequent changes in personnel, affecting continuity and the retention of knowledge gained through training. These constraints also increase the need for targeted recruitment and development in areas such as research, budget analysis, and legal drafting.

- **Regulatory and legal framework:** The institutional framework shapes the scope and organisation of parliamentary learning. Without a dedicated Parliamentary Act, Parliament's autonomy may be constrained; the absence of binding guidelines can also make it harder to establish consistent standards of institutional conduct. These conditions influence how training for MPs and staff is designed and delivered. Clearer rules could support consistent, enforceable practices that Members and personnel can apply in their daily work.

- **Organisational structure:** Where the organisational structure does not match Parliament's strategic direction, planning and delivery of training may be affected. Limited operational autonomy in the absence of a Parliamentary Service Commission can further constrain decisions about the timing, quality, and provision of development opportunities for MPs and parliamentary staff.

5. AREAS FOR POSSIBLE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING IMPROVEMENT

In response to these challenges, Parliament could in future consider measures to improve the reach, relevance, and lasting value of its capacity-building work:

- **A well-structured induction programme:** A phased orientation programme appropriate for inducting MPs in a seamless manner. This will cover early information sessions on parliamentary responsibilities, to prepare incoming Members and reduce delays in post-election induction.

- **Enhance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks:** Assess training over time and examine whether it contributes to practical results, such as stronger committee reports, closer budget scrutiny, and more effective use of parliamentary inquiries.

- **Develop digital and e-learning infrastructure:** Invest in accessible e-learning resources so MPs and staff can use self-paced courses, procedural guidance, and legal information flexibly alongside parliamentary duties.

- **Build research and data capability:** Develop the parliamentary research function and provide relevant training in data analysis and evidence-based policy research, enabling Members to draw on reliable information during debate.

- **Adaptation and Continuous improvement:** A continuous evaluation of capacity building programmes to assess learning and adaptability for improvement.

- **Establish training center:** Identify core competencies and specific skill gaps that the center will address. In the mid-term, this will be possible through collaboration with stakeholders.

6. CONCLUSION

The National Assembly's ability to scrutinise Executive power and serve the public depends in part on the capabilities of its Members and staff. Ongoing, role-specific training is therefore an investment in both parliamentary performance and democratic governance. Strengthening Members' analytical and legislative skills, while equipping staff with current professional knowledge and tools, can help Parliament address complex social and economic matters and protect institutional integrity.

A sustainable approach to parliamentary learning requires more than occasional seminars. It involves identifying learning needs, providing structured induction, and reviewing whether training has improved performance. By combining internal expertise with regional and international cooperation, Parliament can continue developing a capable and resilient workforce, notwithstanding the absence of a dedicated training institute.

Bibliography:

- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). (n.d.). *The CPA Parliamentary Academy*. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Available at: https://www.cpahq.org/cpa-initiatives/cpa-parliamentary-academy/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). (2026). *Botswana Parliament hosts Africa Clerks Seminar*. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Available at: https://www.cpahq.org/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). (2026). *Parliament of Botswana hosts workshop focused on advancing democracy and Parliamentary accountability*. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Available at: https://www.cpahq.org/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). (2020). *Executive Committee: Capacity-building for Member Parliaments*. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). (2022). *How Canada's Parliament created a new way to onboard MPs and bid them farewell*. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). (2025). *Welcoming new parliamentarians: Good practices for onboarding and offboarding MPs*. Inter-Parliamentary Union and Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). (n.d.). *Assistance in action*. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/capacity-building/assistance-in-action (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). (n.d.). *Parliamentary experts*. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].
- Parliament of Botswana. (2026). *Benchmarking for Better Parliaments: Malawi Delegation Visits Botswana*. National Assembly of Botswana. Available at: https://www.parliament.gov.bw/ (Retrieved: 21 September 2026].

Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia, commended his broad approach to getting training support from a wide range of external organisations. She commented that his staff would get value from the different programmes. She said they do so they

something similar in Australia, when an individual attends external CPD programmes they are encouraged to repot back on its quality and usefulness to the role so others may benefit. She enquired about different learning pathways for staff.

Mr Ismael Goulal BOUDINE, Djibouti, congratulated the speaker on a fantastic presentation and asked how traditional leaders from the country are involved in legislative power?

Dr Gabriel Malebang, Botswana, replied to Australia that they currently do not have a tiered training policy, this is happening in the context of other changes such as reviewing standing orders, creating a code of conduct, reviewing the organisation structure and bringing a new service bill.

In response to Djibouti, he said it is a unicameral system but there is also an advisory chamber with traditional leaders who offer advice. The House of Traditional Leaders receives matters which have a bearing on the constitution, they do not perform a legislative function in the way of a bicameral chamber. He said the Secretary of the House of Traditional Leaders is part of his staff in the National Assembly.

5. Communication: Mr Philippe Schwab, Federal Assembly of Switzerland on 'Best practice for the recruitment of parliamentary staff'

Comparative perspectives drawing on the example of the Swiss parliamentary administration

Introduction

When discussing the recruitment of parliamentary staff, it is necessary to begin by recalling the very particular context in which this recruitment takes place. A parliamentary administration is not like any other administration. It serves Parliament and its Members in a highly politicized environment, yet must guard against any bias. It must remain impartial even as its environment constantly changes as majorities shift. It must also contribute to the balance of powers by helping Parliament to counterbalance the Government's expertise. These constraints give rise to three qualities that any good parliamentary administration must embody: neutrality, permanence and autonomy.

In Switzerland, these principles translate very concretely into the institutional set-up. The Parliamentary Services depend exclusively on the legislature and are entirely

independent of the government. They are headed by the Secretary General, who acts both as chief of staff to the parliamentary bodies and as manager of the parliamentary administration.

The Secretary General enjoys very broad autonomy in the recruitment and management of staff. Above him, an Administration Delegation (ADel) - comprising the Presidents and Vice Presidents of both Chambers - exercises general oversight of the administration but shows great restraint: it never intervenes in the selection of individual staff members, except for a limited number of senior management posts provided for in legislation.

It is this clear distinction between general political guidelines and specific administrative decisions that enables the Swiss parliamentary administration to select its staff solely on the basis of the needs of the post and the skills required, shielded from any hierarchical or partisan pressure.

In this context, recruitment is therefore not simply a matter of filling a vacancy. It plays a direct part in the parliamentary administration's ability to remain neutral, competent, permanent and independent.

It is within this institutional context that the best recruitment practices take on their full meaning.

1. Transparency in the recruitment process

Transparency in the recruitment process is the first of these practices.

In the Swiss federal administration, both parliamentary and governmental, the public advertisement of vacancies is a legal requirement. Far more than a mere formality, this procedure guarantees fair access to all applicants. Certain exceptions exist, notably for internships or temporary staff exchanges.

This openness in recruitment is a fundamental pillar. To meet Parliament's requirements, the Parliamentary Services seek a diverse range of qualified candidates. They recruit exclusively from the labour market, competing with other employers, both public and private. Each staff member is selected for a specific post, within the framework of a role-based system: the system provides for neither competitive entrance examinations nor automatic career progression.

Positions are open to everyone. The only factors that count are professional and interpersonal skills, as well as experience. Job vacancies, published centrally, clearly set out the duties, responsibilities, required skills and selection criteria. They are advertised on:
- the Swiss Confederation's jobs portal (www.stelle.admin.ch),
- professional networks such as LinkedIn,
- university forums,
- and a dedicated page on the Parliament's website (www.parlament.ch/fr/services/offres emploi) .

An employer branding strategy has also been put in place to raise the profile of the parliamentary administration and promote its career opportunities.

Finally, transparency is not limited to the publication of job vacancies. It also involves justifying the decisions taken. All applications are processed centrally, and the documentation of each stage of the recruitment process ensures full traceability, whilst enabling us to identify areas for improvement for future recruitment.

2. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

This requirement for transparency is inextricably linked to a second principle: that of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Transparent recruitment only makes sense if access to posts is genuinely equitable, without distinction based on gender, age, origin, disability, religion or any other protected characteristic. Equal access for both internal and external candidates is also explicitly sought. This openness allows for a comparison of qualifications and also encourages a mix of profiles.

The stakes are particularly high in the parliamentary administration. Such an administration must serve all Members of Parliament equally, regardless of their political affiliation. It would therefore be difficult to reconcile with this requirement for neutrality if recruitment were determined by partisan or personal considerations.

Whilst the Secretary General and the ADel refrain from intervening in individual recruitment decisions, they reserve the right to set general guidelines concerning the representation of linguistic communities, the integration of people with disabilities, and gender balance. In other words, equal opportunities are not left to chance: they are the subject of an explicit political framework, whilst their practical implementation remains the responsibility of the administration.

3. Merit-based recruitment

Once access to the post has been made equitable, the central question remains: how should candidates be selected?

In the Swiss parliamentary administration, recruitment is based exclusively on merit: the only factors that count are candidates' professional and interpersonal skills, as well as their experience, regardless of their seniority or whether they are internal or external candidates.

This involves assessing applications according to objective criteria, defined before the vacancy is even advertised, and, where relevant, using written tests or practical simulations. For senior positions, in-depth assessments run by external providers may be organized, but only in very few cases.

The composition of the recruitment team also serves as an important safeguard. We ensure that selection decisions are taken by several people, so as to compare assessments and limit the influence of any single individual's judgement. The systematic involvement of a human resources representative also helps to ensure a structured and professional selection process. This comprises several interview

stages: it may begin with a brief online exchange, followed by a face-to-face interview and possibly two further ones. This approach enables us to assess 3 candidates' skills and aptitudes from different angles and to base the recruitment decision on as broad and objective an assessment as possible.

4. A clear definition of job profiles

To recruit because of merit, it is essential to know precisely what one is looking for. This is why defining the job profile is a crucial step.

In the Swiss parliamentary administration, each post is assessed - before it is advertised - based on a detailed job description, and then classified into a specific salary grade determined by the required qualifications, the scope of responsibilities and the level of risk inherent in the role.

This precision has a very practical consequence: it enables candidates to be selected on the basis of factors directly related to the post.

This rigour in the job description - responsibilities, expected technical and behavioural skills, level of experience, language requirements - is not merely an administrative formality: it is essential for ensuring that the assessment of applications is truly objective. It also facilitates comparison between applications and reduces the risk of unannounced subjective criteria coming into play.

Thus, the quality of recruitment depends largely on the quality of the work carried out even before the vacancy is advertised.

5. Preventing conflicts of interest

The prevention of conflicts of interest also takes on a particular significance because of its proximity to the political world.

The Swiss system specifically seeks to maintain a watertight separation between political and administrative responsibilities. This is reflected in a strict division of roles: the political bodies - the ADel - set the general framework and appoint a limited number of senior managers, but they scrupulously refrain from intervening in the selection of other staff, which is the exclusive responsibility of the Secretary General. This institutional separation is the best bulwark against favouritism and partisan interference.

This separation must also be safeguarded during the recruitment process. Those taking part in an interview must therefore disclose any personal or professional connection they may have with a candidate. The aim is not to assume that such a connection automatically constitutes a problem. Rather, it is to ensure that it is identified and, where necessary, to take steps to preserve the impartiality of the process.

6. The professionalization of recruitment

Ultimately, the effectiveness of this system depends on the professionalism of those carrying out recruitment. In practical terms, this involves training those responsible for recruitment in interview techniques and the detection of unconscious bias, assessing applications using standardized assessment grids to ensure a fair comparison, and archiving application files in accordance with data protection rules. Verifying candidates' references and integrity is also part of this approach - checking qualifications, verifying professional references and, where the legal framework permits, carrying out security checks for the most sensitive posts. These checks are not a sign of mistrust: they are the logical counterpart to the trust subsequently placed in the person selected.

7. Induction and the probationary period

Recruitment does not end with the decision to hire. A smooth induction is key to the success of any new appointment: a structured induction programme should be put in place, clear objectives set for the probationary period, and regular follow-ups organized with the line manager, supported by human resources professionals. This approach to follow-up is, in fact, in line with a well-established practice within the Swiss parliamentary administration, where annual appraisal interviews provide an opportunity to review working conditions, set performance and behavioural objectives, and propose training measures tailored to everyone's career development.

Interns and apprentices have the opportunity, at the end of their training, to apply for a 'junior' post within the Parliamentary Services for a maximum period of two years. This role offers them the chance to broaden and deepen their knowledge by working in other sectors. Following this experience, these staff members also form a pool of young talent capable of contributing to the renewal of skills within the Parliamentary Services.

8. Evaluation and continuous improvement

Finally, no recruitment system can remain static: it must be part of a process of continuous evaluation and improvement. This involves measuring the quality of recruitment - turnaround times, satisfaction, retention, performance - periodically reviewing procedures, and incorporating feedback from candidates, managers and new staff members.

The labour market in Switzerland is dynamic, and competition for certain profiles is particularly fierce. This situation requires the parliamentary administration to be able to attract and recruit highly qualified individuals. This is why our recruitment processes must be agile. To avoid missing out on high-calibre candidates, we review applications as soon as we receive them and promptly contact those who best match the job requirements.

It is this ability to respond and adapt that enables even a well-established system to keep pace with the realities on the ground.

Conclusion

What can we take away from this overview of best practices in the recruitment of parliamentary staff? Firstly, that the quality of a recruitment process always rests on the same foundation: transparency, equal opportunities, and merit as the sole selection criterion.

Secondly, that this foundation can only bear fruit if it is underpinned by clearly defined job profiles and by recruiters who are trained and well-equipped. But the Swiss example teaches a deeper lesson above all: the best safeguard against conflicts of interest and partisan pressure is not merely a matter of individual good conduct; it is an institutional framework that clearly separates political decisions from administrative ones, and entrusts the latter to an autonomous, neutral and permanent administration.

It is this autonomy, based on the principle of subsidiarity - leaving the decision to the person closest to the issue - that enables the parliamentary administration to recruit and manage its staff solely on the basis of competence. And this is perhaps, ultimately, the best protection that a parliamentary democracy can offer its own institutions.

Mr Masibulele XASO, South Africa, indicated that, in his Parliament, the Secretary General was appointed by the House following an interview process which, however, was not laid down in law. He wished to know whether, in Switzerland, the procedure for appointing the Clerk was governed by legislation. He requested that the procedure for appointing the Clerk be presented.

Mr Saïd Mokadem, Maghreb Consultative Council, noted that a number of criteria had been mentioned in the context of merit-based recruitment, including the absence of conflicts of interest. He asked the speaker to clarify what was meant by this concept.

Mr Salim Djalal, Algeria, wished to know whether the institutional separation between the parliamentary administration and the State administration had always existed.

Mr Saloly Fadel Touré, Senegal, indicated that, in many parliaments, including his own, there were no specialised recruiters. He noted that, in some parliaments, the Secretary General enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in recruitment matters, whereas in his country the Secretary General made proposals but the final decision rested with the political authorities.

He also asked whether a probationary period of six months was sufficient, particularly when a staff member was recruited during a period when Parliament was not sitting. He wished to know how such periods were managed in

Switzerland and whether Parliament collaborated with other institutions in order to identify the profiles sought.

Ms Sarah Davies, United Kingdom, emphasised that the arrival of young staff members in parliamentary administrations represented both an opportunity and a challenge, as they brought considerable energy and new ideas. However, she indicated that difficulties could sometimes arise regarding their understanding of the requirement of impartiality, which they might interpret in a particularly strict manner. She considered that, from the recruitment stage onwards, care should be taken to ensure that new staff members understood the constraints inherent in parliamentary work so that they would not subsequently feel excessively restricted in their activities. She asked how parliamentary administrations could support young recruits in helping them understand what was expected of them.

Mr Jean Mukuala Bateke, Democratic Republic of the Congo, asked what advantages there were in using specialised recruiters.

Mr Bienvenido Ekua Esono Abe, Equatorial Guinea, noted that the speaker had mentioned the existence of certain exceptions within the recruitment process and asked him to specify what those exceptions were.

Mr Philippe Schwab, Switzerland, indicated that, in Switzerland, the Secretary General is proposed by the bureaux of the two chambers and is then elected by the chambers for a four-year term, corresponding to the duration of the legislature. The procedure is therefore renewed every four years.

In response to the question concerning conflicts of interest, he recalled that the law entrusts the Secretary General with responsibility for managing the parliamentary administration and recruiting its staff. Political bodies may seek to influence the process, but the Secretary General, having been elected by the chambers and benefiting from their confidence, must be able to exercise this authority independently. If the chambers are not satisfied with the way in which he exercises it, it is for them to replace him.

He specified that a candidate's membership of a political party does not constitute an obstacle to recruitment. He indicated that he himself remains a member of a political party, without holding any position of responsibility within it.

With regard to the institutional organisation, he recalled that, before the constitutional revision of 1999, the parliamentary administration formed part of the State administration and that the Secretary General was appointed by the Government. The constitutional reform established the complete statutory and budgetary independence of the parliamentary administration. Since then, the

Government has been unable to intervene either in the budgetary procedure or in recruitment matters.

He indicated that, following the 1999 revision, a statute governing parliamentary staff was adopted by the chambers. This statute provides, in particular, that the Secretary General is the head of the parliamentary administration and enshrines a clear separation between it and the government administration.

He emphasised that, in Switzerland, recruitment decisions are not subject to the approval of political leaders. In his view, a strong Parliament must be able to rely on a competent administration. He considered that this required recruitment to be based solely on merit. He recalled that this system did not exist in Switzerland thirty years ago and expressed the hope that other parliaments, including that of Senegal, might evolve in the same direction. He added that this model enjoys particular legitimacy, as the constitutional reform was approved by the people.

Regarding the probationary period, he considered that six months may be insufficient. He indicated that, at the end of a six-month period, an employee is granted a permanent contract and that it then becomes more difficult to terminate their employment, particularly because of the possibility of appeals before the courts. During the probationary period, the procedure for dismissing a staff member is simpler and cannot be challenged.

He added that staff members are assessed annually by their line manager. Some develop favourably, while others may no longer perform satisfactorily after several years, at which point it becomes more difficult to part ways with them.
He indicated that the administration may call upon external specialists for certain highly technical recruitment processes, particularly in the fields of information technology or cybersecurity, when it does not possess internally the expertise necessary to assess candidates' profiles.

With regard to the younger generations, he considered that they represent a significant challenge for parliamentary administrations because of their different expectations and ways of working. Over the next ten years, approximately 30% of the staff of the Swiss parliamentary administration, belonging to the baby boomer generation, are expected to retire. The administration will therefore need to recruit from younger generations, whose expectations regarding part-time work, remote working and the organisation of workspaces differ from those of their predecessors.

He also noted that the relationship with the employer has evolved. Some young employees consider, after a few years, that they have exhausted the opportunities offered by their position and wish to pursue their careers elsewhere. Nevertheless,

he expressed confidence in administrations' ability to adapt, considering that younger generations particularly need the trust and guidance that more experienced colleagues can provide.
By way of example, he indicated that recruitment practices have had to be adapted. Whereas a closing date was previously always set for positions open through public competition, it may now be necessary to close a procedure after only a few days, once a sufficient number of applications has been received, in order not to lose strong candidates.

In response to the question from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he indicated that recruitment specialists provide a useful external perspective. Internal recruiters may indeed have a tendency to favour profiles similar to their own, whereas a recruitment professional can offer a different assessment and provide a contradiction that is often welcome.

In response to Equatorial Guinea, he specified that the main exceptions to the recruitment procedure through public competition concern the Secretary General and interns. The Secretary General is proposed by the bureaux and then elected by the chambers. Internship positions, for their part, are not subject to public competition and are filled through a simplified procedure.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, noted that several of the issues raised by Mr Philippe Schwab could form the subject of a discussion theme at the next session in Geneva, particularly the evolving expectations and motivations of the younger generations joining parliamentary administrations.

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

6. Communication: Mr Ali Hajimohammadi, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 'In the news, innovations, new technology and best practices at Parliament'

Mr. President,
Esteemed Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
I would like to begin my remarks, on the eve of the International Day for the Prevention of Violence and World Children's Day, by commemorating the children who have fallen victim to war and violence; children who have been deprived of their childhood, education and lives.

With hearts filled with sorrow, I pay tribute to the memory of the innocent children of Minab and Lamerd who lost their lives at a school and a sports hall during the

missile attacks by the United States and Israel. The memory of these children is a serious warning about the shared responsibility of us all; a responsibility to build a world in which schools, universities, sports stadiums, every educational environment, and every other civilian environment are, above all, a safe haven for the security, education, hope and lives of children.

I am pleased to attend this meeting and would like to express my sincere appreciation for the hospitality extended by our friendly host country, the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as for the efforts of the Secretaries General of Parliaments, the IPU Secretariat, and the President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments in providing this valuable opportunity for dialogue, exchange of experience, and the strengthening of parliamentary cooperation.

Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Participants,
I would like to briefly share with you my views under three main themes:
First, current developments and new innovations in the parliamentary sphere;
Second, the development of regional and international cooperation among parliaments;
And third, best practices in attracting, developing and employing human capital.
Theme One:
Current Developments and New Innovations in the Parliamentary Sphere

Distinguished Colleagues,
The rapid pace of today's developments has left public institutions, and parliaments in particular, with little room for prolonged trial and error. Therefore, innovation is no longer merely an option; rather, it has become a necessity for maintaining the effectiveness, accountability and effective engagement of parliament with society.

But in the meantime, we must not forget one principle:
The true value of innovation becomes apparent when technology is placed at the service of humanity, law, the public interest and good governance.

Good governance is founded on principles such as the rule of law, transparency, accountability, justice, participation and public trust. These principles are also of particular importance in parliamentary diplomacy, because dialogue, confidence-building and cooperation among parliaments can be sustainable only when they are established within clear, transparent and responsible mechanisms.

Therefore, the modernization of parliament must proceed hand in hand with maintaining public trust and strengthening institutional accountability.
One of the most important developments before us in this regard is, undoubtedly, artificial intelligence.

AI governance does not merely mean the use of a new technology; rather, it means establishing a set of principles, rules and mechanisms to ensure that the development and use of artificial intelligence take place within the framework of law, ethics, security, transparency and accountability.

In parliaments, we believe that artificial intelligence can create significant capacities in at least three areas:

First, making legislative and oversight processes intelligent;
Second, increasing the efficiency of executive and administrative affairs;
And third, enhancing transparency and public participation.

The analysis of legal documents, the processing of vast volumes of data, faster access to legislative records, and support for legal research and analysis can create new capacities for improving parliamentary processes.

Of course, making use of these capacities requires simultaneous attention to security, data quality, privacy protection, prevention of discrimination, algorithmic transparency and human accountability.

In this regard, one of the new experiences of the Islamic Parliament of Iran is the establishment of the Artificial Intelligence and Data-Driven Governance Parliamentary Caucus, which can provide a platform for dialogue, examination and follow-up of issues related to this technology at the parliamentary level.

We believe that linking parliamentary and executive capacities in this field can help establish a more effective connection between legislation, policymaking and the executive requirements of artificial intelligence.

Accordingly, the specific proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran at this meeting is the development of a strategic document on artificial intelligence governance in parliaments; a document that, while defining the principles and requirements for the responsible use of artificial intelligence, also takes into consideration capacities such as crowdsourcing and the participation of intellectuals and experts.

Our objective is for this technology to serve not as a replacement for human decision-making and institutional responsibility, but rather as a tool for increasing the speed, accuracy, transparency and quality of parliamentary decision making.
At the same time, we must not overlook a fundamental consideration.

The widespread and unregulated use of artificial intelligence can create new risks. The dimensions, capabilities and impacts of this technology are still being understood and assessed, and the experience of using it in many parliamentary processes is also relatively new.

Therefore, the main issue is the responsible, targeted and proportionate use of technology in accordance with the needs of each parliament; not the use of technology merely so that we do not fall behind the technological race.
I hope that this issue can become one of the practical outcomes of this meeting in the area of innovation and new parliamentary technologies.

Theme Two:
Development of Regional and International Cooperation among Parliaments

Dear Colleagues,
In today's world, multilateralism remains one of the most important mechanisms for dialogue, coordination and exchange of experience in addressing common challenges.
Parliaments can also play an effective role in this process through the capacity of parliamentary diplomacy.

Cooperation among parliaments is not limited to political relations; rather, it can provide a basis for the exchange of experience, transfer of knowledge, economic and social cooperation, and a better understanding of each other's capacities.

The experience of multilateral arrangements such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS also demonstrates that establishing regular mechanisms for dialogue and the exchange of experience can transform cooperation among countries from occasional interactions into continuous and institutionalized processes.
This experience can also be taken into consideration at the parliamentary level.
One area of cooperation that could be considered within this framework is the establishment of an intelligent infrastructure for crowdsourcing and sharing parliamentary knowledge, in such a way that the experiences of parliaments in various fields are recorded, categorized and made available to other parliaments.

Here, we have a simple Persian expression which, in my view, conveys an important message for parliamentary cooperation:
"Let us not reinvent the wheel."

Cooperation among parliaments provides us with an opportunity to learn about each other's successful and unsuccessful experiences, avoid repeating mistakes, and make use of tested solutions, while, of course, adapting them to the circumstances of each country.

Accordingly, our specific proposal is the development of a strategic document for crowdsourcing parliamentary knowledge and experience in three main areas:
1) Administrative and executive affairs;
2) Legislation; and
3) Oversight.

Such a document can provide a basis for practical cooperation among parliaments, and its results can be evaluated and followed up at future meetings.

Theme Three: Human Capital and the Future of Parliaments

Distinguished Colleagues,
And now, the third theme, namely the attraction, development and employment of human capital.

In the era of new technologies, no matter how far technology advances, human capital will remain the most important foundation for the transformation of parliament.

A smart parliament, without specialized, trained, creative and responsible human resources, will merely be a collection of technologies and systems.

Therefore, methods of attracting and employing human resources must also be redesigned in accordance with the needs of the parliaments of the future; parliaments that face complex issues such as artificial intelligence, big data, cybersecurity, the digital economy and cross-border issues.

In this regard, the experience of the Islamic Republic of Iran in utilizing the capacities of think tanks and research centers as a link between knowledge and parliament can provide a noteworthy example for the exchange of experience.

This approach, drawing on the specialized capacities available in universities and research centers, can contribute to specialized and problem oriented decision making, without necessarily leading to an unnecessary expansion of administrative structures and human resources.

Therefore, alongside reforming recruitment and employment processes, we must also pay attention to the continuous development of skills, specialized training, lifelong learning, and the utilization of the capacities of the academic and professional community.

Distinguished Colleagues,
In this speech, I have sought, by focusing on the three main themes of the meeting, to emphasize that the parliament of the future must be simultaneously intelligent, human-centered, accountable and connected to society.

A smart parliament is not a parliament that merely has access to more technology; rather, it is a parliament that uses technology in the service of better legislation, more effective oversight, more efficient management and more transparent communication with the people.

From this perspective, we put forward three specific proposals to our colleagues:
First, the development of a strategic document on artificial intelligence governance in parliaments;

Second, the development of a strategic document on crowdsourcing and the sharing of parliamentary knowledge and experience;

And third, strengthening cooperation among parliaments in the area of human capital development and utilizing the capacities of think tanks and academic and specialized centers.

In this regard, the Executive Deputy of the Islamic Parliament stands ready, with the permission of the Honorable Speaker of the Parliament and in coordination with the ASGP Secretariat and distinguished colleagues, to actively participate in pursuing these proposals and to make its experiences and capacities available to interested parliaments.

Our objective is for the discussions of this meeting not to remain merely at the level of exchanging views, but to continue in the form of specific proposals, practical cooperation and follow-up results.

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank our friendly host country, the United Republic of Tanzania, the ASGP and IPU Secretariats, and all distinguished Secretaries General and colleagues for providing this valuable opportunity.

I hope that this meeting will contribute to deepening parliamentary cooperation, exchanging knowledge and experience, and our joint movement towards more effective, smarter and more accountable parliaments.

I sincerely thank you for your kind attention and eagerly look forward to hearing your views and benefiting from your valuable experiences.
Peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

7. Communication: Dr Firas Zuhair Jaafar, Iraq Parliament, on 'Enhancing Legislative and Oversight Performance: A framework for MPs and Senior Staff'

Dr. José Pedro Montero
President of the Association of Secretaries General of National Parliaments
Dear Colleagues
Greetings

Introduction:

Parliamentary institutions today are undergoing rapid transformations in the nature of their roles and responsibilities. This is a result of the evolving legislative and oversight environment, the expanding scope of public policies, the accelerating digital transformation, the significant advancements in artificial intelligence technologies, and the increasing expectations of citizens regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of public institutions.

These transformations have directly impacted the skills and knowledge required by members of parliament and parliamentary staff. Consequently, training and capacity building have become both an essential component of institutional development for parliaments and a complementary activity.

In this context, the Iraqi Parliament, through the Parliamentary Development Institute, worked to develop the philosophy of parliamentary training towards building a more sustainable system that is linked to the actual needs of parliamentary work, benefits from digital transformation tools and modern technologies, and seeks to measure the impact of training on institutional performance.

Dear Colleagues
In this input, within the allotted time, and under the title "Enhancing Legislative and Oversight Performance within the Framework of Training Members of Parliament and Senior Staff," we will review the most prominent features of this approach, the challenges associated with it, and future opportunities for its development.

First: From Training to Building Parliamentary Capacity

The Institute for Parliamentary Development, in its vision for parliamentary training, has adopted the principle that success should not be measured solely by the number of programs implemented or the number of participants, but rather by the extent to which training contributes to developing knowledge, skills, and practical application within the parliamentary institution.

Based on this vision for training, it was necessary to focus on three interconnected phases, as follows:
- Identifying Needs
- Building Capacity
- Measuring Impact

Accordingly, program design begins with identifying the actual needs related to the duties of the member of parliament or staff, then selecting the appropriate training intervention, culminating in evaluating the extent to which knowledge and skills are transferred to the work environment.

Thus, training becomes a means to achieve a broader institutional goal, which is to improve the quality of parliamentary performance.

Second: Linking Training to the Core Functions of Parliament

Leaving no room for doubt or ambiguity, the parliamentary institution must ensure that its capacity-building programs are linked to its constitutional functions, systems, and institutional laws; otherwise, their developmental outcomes will be detached from the daily practices of parliamentary work.

From this perspective, the Institute for Parliamentary Development focuses on linking training programs to the main areas of parliamentary work, foremost among them:
- Legislation
- Parliamentary Oversight
- Budget and Financial Control
- Work in Parliamentary Committees (Permanent and Temporary)
- Parliamentary Representation and Institutional Communication

This also necessitates distinguishing between the needs of members of parliament and the needs of parliamentary staff, as well as considering the nature of the job, responsibility, and prior experience.

It is perhaps useful to emphasize that the goal of this vision is to gradually move from the concept of a “standardized training program” to the concept of a “training path linked to the role and needs”.

Third: The Parliamentary Staff and Institutional Memory

Building parliamentary capacity is not limited to members of parliament. The staff who support the work of members of parliament - that is, the parliamentary administration - are the backbone of parliament in many respects. Parliaments and their members rely on a dedicated staff to provide impartial assistance to members in performing their legislative, oversight, and representative duties. This contributes to the continuity of institutional work and the preservation of accumulated knowledge and experience between legislative sessions. Therefore, developing their capabilities represents an investment in the institutional memory of parliament.

Capacity building and development encompass priority areas, including but not limited to:

- Developing skills related to committee work.
- Preparing research and reports.
- Legislative drafting.
- Parliamentary procedures (daily workflow procedures).
- Budget analysis.
- Information management.
- Digital Transformation (Automation and Good Governance)
- Protocol and Institutional Communication

Here, the importance of building sustainable career paths that allow employees to develop their skills cumulatively, rather than relying on isolated programs not linked to a clear career path, becomes evident.

Fourth: Digital Transformation and Training Sustainability

Digital transformation represents one of the most important opportunities available to parliamentary training institutions to expand access to knowledge and ensure its continuity.

In this context, the Institute for Parliamentary Development adopted an electronic training platform that provides a more flexible learning environment, helps overcome the limitations of time and place, makes training content available, and conducts tests and assessments. It also supports the sustainability of the training process.

Here, we emphasize that the electronic platform should not be viewed as a replacement for in-person training, but rather as part of an integrated training model that combines digital learning, face-to-face training, simulations, and practical application. In this regard, and specifically under Paragraph 4, we would like to state that our future vision aims to transition from an electronic training platform providing everything the parliamentary institution needs, from parliamentarians to

staff, to develop parliamentary capabilities to a digital system dedicated to managing knowledge and parliamentary capabilities.

Fifth: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Parliamentary Training

The rapid development of artificial intelligence technologies opens new horizons for parliamentary training and development institutions. These technologies can be employed to tailor training content to the trainee's needs, analyze texts, prepare training scenarios, build interactive tests, simulate parliamentary situations, and facilitate access to knowledge and information.

However, the use of these technologies within parliamentary institutions must be governed by clear regulations concerning accuracy and reliability, data protection, privacy, information security, and human responsibility for decision-making. Regarding the extent to which artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are used in parliamentary training and development, the Institute for Parliamentary Development's vision is based on the following fundamental principle:
“To utilize AI as a tool to enhance parliamentary capacity, not as a replacement for human expertise, institutional governance, or constitutional responsibility.”

Sixth: Measuring the Impact of Training

Measuring the impact remains one of the most prominent challenges facing parliamentary training institutions. Traditional measurement, which relies on the number of programs or participants, does not provide a sufficient indicator of the true value that training adds to the institution. Therefore, developing a measurement system should gradually progress through four levels:

- Participation and satisfaction
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Application in the work environment
- Impact on institutional performance.

Hence, the most important question is no longer how many training programs were implemented, but rather what the member of parliament, employee, or institution is now able to do better as a result of this training.

Dear colleagues,
Having reviewed the key features of the Iraqi Parliament's vision as reflected in the work of the Parliamentary Development Institute, we now turn to section seven, where we will discuss the most significant challenges associated with this approach and the future opportunities for its development.

Seventh: Challenges

Since its establishment, the Parliamentary Development Institute of the Iraqi Parliament has spared no effort, in cooperation with the departments of the General Secretariat, to develop a sustainable system for building parliamentary capacities. This system aims to overcome practical and administrative challenges and obstacles

encountered during its development. We will now outline the most prominent of these challenges, which are:

- The differing needs of parliamentarians and staff
- The limited time available to members of parliament.
- The rapid pace of change in legislative and technical matters, and the continuous need to update content.
- The difficulty in measuring the long-term impact of training.

Digital transformation and artificial intelligence also add new challenges related to data governance, cyber-security, and information verification.
However, these challenges simultaneously present an opportunity to redesign parliamentary training systems to be more flexible, specialized, and performance-oriented.

Eighth: Prospects for Cooperation Among Parliaments

The diverse experiences of parliaments constitute a valuable knowledge resource and a crucial foundation that can be leveraged through expanding cooperation and exchanging expertise among institutions concerned with parliamentary training and development.

In this context, the Iraqi Council of Representatives recognizes the importance of working on:

1. Exchanging successful training experiences and methodologies
2. Developing joint training programs
3. Exchanging trainers and experts
4. Developing shared tools for measuring impact
5. Exchanging experiences related to digital training and the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

The possibility of establishing a parliamentary training and development network that brings together peer institutions, centers, and institutes could also be explored. This would allow for the sustainable exchange of knowledge and best practices.

Conclusion
Investing in the training of members of parliament and parliamentary staff is, in essence, an investment in the parliamentary institution's own ability to perform its constitutional functions efficiently and effectively.
The experience of the Iraqi Council of Representatives confirms that developing training requires a shift from isolated training activities to an integrated system that begins with identifying needs, is linked to parliamentary functions, leverages digital transformation and innovation, and concludes with impact measurement.
The modern parliament needs not only more information, but also the institutional capacity to translate knowledge into practice, practice into performance, and performance into impact.
Therefore, we see that the future of parliamentary training can be summarized in the equation:

Precise needs + Practical training + Responsible technology + Impact measurement = Sustainable parliamentary capacity

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,
The Iraqi Council of Representatives, in its sixth parliamentary session (2026), is focusing on current issues and innovations, including a broad package of economic and security legislation and structural reforms supporting governance and digital technology.
The most prominent current issues and legislative innovations on the Council's agenda can be summarized in the following areas:

- Legislative innovations and digital transformation.
- Current economic and investment files.
- Legal and social reforms.
- Urgent security and oversight files.
- Legislative change.

In conclusion, we thank the General Secretariat of the Association of Secretaries General of National Parliaments for providing this opportunity and for sharing with my colleagues the most important current and future issues affecting the development process.
Thanks are also due to my fellow Secretaries General and the distinguished attendees for their kind attention.

Mr Saloly Fadel Touré, Senegal, wished, with regard to the preservation of expertise within parliaments, to share a reflection. He considered that the IPU could establish a framework to promote the publication and production of materials in order to better preserve and transmit the knowledge and experience acquired within parliamentary administrations.

8. GENERAL DEBATE: UNICAMERAL OR BICAMERAL PARLIAMENT: WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES? PLEASE SHARE CONCRETE EXPERIENCES FROM YOUR PARLIAMENTS (*5 MINUTES PER SPEAKER*)

Dr Georg Kleemann, opened the general debate:

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,
The way in which parliament is organised is one of the key issues in any democracy. This is about far more than the mere technical structure of its constitution. Rather, it concerns matters of democratic representation, checks and balances on power, the consideration of regional interests and, last but not least, the question of how quickly and effectively political decisions can be reached. The organisation of democratic decision-making processes does not necessarily require a bicameral system – a unicameral system can also fulfil the

essential parliamentary functions of a democratic community or state, namely law-making, the oversight of government, and representation. Having said that, bicameral systems exist in around a third of all countries. The reasons for this are just as varied as the way second chambers are structured, which regularly reflects social developments or historical and cultural traditions.

One key aspect, for example, is the shift from old to new power structures: in some countries, the second chamber was established to ensure that social groups or former political structures continue to be involved.

The decentralised structure of a state also plays a major role. Second chambers are usually bodies in which the interests of regional population groups are indirectly represented by the governments of the constituent states.

The cornerstone of the bicameral system, however, is based on the idea that a two-stage review of draft legislation leads to better law-making. A second chamber allows for greater scrutiny of legislation because it provides additional checks and balances. It can examine draft legislation from a different perspective, place the focus on particular interests, and force political majorities to seek compromises. This can improve the quality of legislation, prevent hasty decisions, and put short-term political sentiments into perspective.

Despite these advantages, the bicameral system is by no means uncontroversial. In Western democracies, second chambers have been abolished in recent times, for example in Sweden, Denmark and New Zealand. In Belgium, the Senate is due to be dissolved by 2029. Critics of the bicameral system have expressed doubts about its effectiveness. The involvement of two chambers can slow down legislative processes, and different majorities and political interests can lead to deadlocks – something that can be particularly problematic in times of crisis. Another point of criticism is the additional resources required. Two chambers mean more members, higher costs, and a greater administrative burden. Critics suggest that these resources could be put to more efficient use.
A unicameral system therefore offers simplicity, faster processes, and a clear allocation of political responsibilities, which can be particularly advantageous in times of crisis. Arguments in favour of a bicameral system include additional checks and balances, a broader representation of interests, and the institutional involvement of regions or constituent states.

There is no “right or wrong” in this regard. Whether a system is better suited to a particular state depends largely on its history, its social structure, and its political system. Another crucial factor in this context is the purpose a second chamber is intended to fulfil, its composition, the way in which it derives its democratic legitimacy, and the powers it holds within the legislative process and

in terms of government oversight.

In the course of today's discussion, we have the chance to share our experiences of the two systems and to exchange views on them. Against this background, I would also like to take the opportunity to say a few words about the position of the Bundesrat within the political and constitutional system of the Federal Republic of Germany – without going into too much detail.
The Bundesrat is unique in the international political landscape. It is true that there are a number of countries in which the constituent states participate in the policy-making of the central government through special chambers. For historical reasons, however, the Bundesrat operates according to its own distinctive rules. According to the German constitution, the Bundesrat is the supreme federal body through which the Länder participate in law-making and administration of the Federal Government, as well as in matters relating to the European Union. They do not participate through directly-elected representatives or senators from the respective Länder, but through members of their respective governments.

The Bundesrat is therefore not a representative body of the people in the traditional sense. Rather, its composition stems from the strong position of federalism in Germany – that is, a political system in which state responsibilities are divided between the central government and the individual Länder in such a way that both political levels are independently responsible for certain subject areas as set out in the constitution. Through the Bundesrat, the governments of the Länder can contribute the expertise and experience of their respective administrations to the law-making of the Federal Government. This can make legislation more practice-focused and helps to ensure that potential issues regarding implementation are identified at an early stage. Furthermore, this prevents the Federal Government from taking decisions whose consequences it does not itself have to manage or finance.

However, the role of the Bundesrat is not limited to safeguarding the interests of the Länder. It is also intended to provide critical yet constructive checks and balances on the Federal Government and the German Bundestag, and, within the Bundestag, in particular on the parliamentary majority supporting the Government. The Bundesrat's involvement in the legislative process varies depending on the extent to which interests of the Länder are affected. In the case of what are known as "consent laws", the Bundesrat has a right of veto; for all other laws, it has the right to lodge an objection, which can, however, be overruled by the German Bundestag.

In the event that the Bundestag and the Bundesrat take different positions on legislation, and a compromise needs to be reached, the mediation committee of

the Bundestag and the Bundesrat comes into play. It is a joint committee of the Bundestag and the Bundesrat, composed of an equal number of members from each body. It mediates between the different positions and draws up a conciliation proposal. The committee cannot pass a law itself, but it can draw up a specific compromise, which the Bundestag and the Bundesrat will then discuss and take a fresh vote on. Conflicts are thus resolved within the parliamentary system and dealt with through a common procedure. This means that the mediaton committee can help to bring legislative procedures to a successful conclusion despite diverging interests.

By way of summary, it can be said that the Bundesrat fulfils several simultaneous functions. It is an instrument to impose checks and balances, a body representing the Länder at the federal level, a forum for balancing interests within the federal system, and an important link between the legislative and executive branches.

I am looking forward to an engaging discussion featuring practical examples from day-to-day parliamentary life, in particular on how second chambers can contribute to better law-making, general reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of unicameral and bicameral parliaments, and thoughts on the question: “Is the perfect bicameral system really perfect?”
Please allow me to leave you with a few specific questions to consider during the discussion:

 What functions should a parliament generally fulfil – and can a single chamber manage this on its own?
 What checks and balances would be necessary in a unicameral system to ensure that the advantages of a speedy process are not achieved at the expense of a loss of checks on power and diversity of interests?
 What problems can arise in bicameral systems, and how can they be addressed? Keyword: crises
 If your parliament is a bicameral parliament, what mechanisms are in place to resolve any disagreements between the two chambers?
 What political, constitutional and historical factors lead to a preference for one system over the other?

- What political, constitutional or historical factors tend to favour one system or the other?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each model in term of the legislative process?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each model in terms of oversight of the executive power?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each model in terms of administrative management?

Mr Stanislas Godefroy, France, said the French bicameral system has some entirely unique features. The Reign of Terror at the end of the Revolution, followed by the coup d'état staged by the future Napoleon III in 1851, led to the view that a unicameral system had facilitated the rise of dictatorships. In 1875, the decision to adopt a bicameral system was the result of a compromise between monarchists and republicans: the former agreed to the election of the Chamber of Deputies by direct universal suffrage in exchange for a second chamber elected by indirect suffrage: each municipality, regardless of its population, would appoint one elector, which would ensure that rural areas were over-represented and thus guarantee that the Senate would be more conservative.

Last year, therefore, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Republican Senate. The Senate is justified both by the need to temper the excesses of direct universal suffrage and, from the outset, by its representation of all local authorities. I should point out that its electoral system has evolved considerably: it continues to over-represent small municipalities, but with a much smaller distortion in relation to population than was originally the case.

The bicameral system can be justified on three grounds:
- an institutional justification;
- a political justification;
- a technical justification.

The Constitution confers upon the Senate the role of representing local authorities, but it does not represent political entities as in a federal state, since France, although decentralised, is a 'single and indivisible' Republic.

The 348 senators are 'elected by elected representatives': they are appointed for six years by around 170,000 'electoral college members' ; half of the Senate is renewed every three years, notably a few months after the local elections (which also take place every six years).

This electoral system encourages candidates and parties to establish a local presence – as they must win seats in local councils to secure a place in the Senate – and also smooths out shifts in political trends over time. Senators are, in a sense, the 'mediators between the state and the regions', to use the words of its President.

The role of the Senate must be viewed in the context of the Fifth Republic's ambition to have a strong executive within a parliamentary system. Elected by

indirect suffrage, the Senate cannot permanently block the passage of a bill. Nor can it bring down the Government, which, in turn, cannot dissolve it.

The principle is parity between the two assemblies, as long as the government does not give the 'final say' to the National Assembly. The legislative procedure is, in a sense, a three-way game in which the Government plays a leading role. In the event of a disagreement with the National Assembly, it can rely on the Senate; conversely, it can ask the National Assembly to 'make a final decision', but only after prior dialogue between the two chambers (mandatory back-and-forth procedure and a meeting of a joint committee, comprising an equal number of members of the National Assembly and senators, to attempt to reach agreement on a text); the 'final say' rests with the executive and therefore does not constitute a confiscation of the legislative function by the lower house.

It may also happen that members of the National Assembly and senators unite against the Government on provisions of a bill or on a piece of legislation.

Not subject to the threat of dissolution, the Senate is not bound by the five-year cycle of the National Assembly and the Presidency of the Republic, which are most often aligned. In the face of the resulting political centralisation, the Senate acts as a chamber of political moderation.

During the 5th Republic, the Senate has at times been in the majority and at times in opposition, but it has always fulfilled this role, and differences in the majority, despite the Government's ability to give the final say to the National Assembly, have not nullified its legislative influence: since 1959, 7 out of 8 bills have been adopted in identical terms by both chambers.

Since 2022, the President of the Republic has no longer held a majority in the National Assembly. In this context, the Senate has played an important role in the legislative process, with the executive frequently relying on it to push its bills through.

There can be no high-quality parliamentary work without multiple readings.

The back-and-forth process, by fostering dialogue between the National Assembly, the Senate and the Government appears to be the best way to ensure that legislation is both as faithful as possible to the general will and founded on sound legal principles.

The French Senate takes particular care to ensure that it passes 'good' laws:

- it attaches great importance to the quality of legislation, which is a 'hallmark' of its work;

- it exercises its function of scrutinising the Government whilst ensuring that this is coordinated with its legislative role, particularly as its position affords it a degree of independence from the executive.

The work of a Senate Committee of Inquiry into drug trafficking in France, for example, led to the tabling of a cross-party bill, which was unanimously adopted by the Senate and became law in June 2025. It ranks among the most significant laws of the past two years.

In conclusion, whilst the Senate no longer serves to prevent the 'dictatorship' of a single chamber, it has established itself as an indispensable counterbalance to the presidential and majority-based system of the 5th Republic. Its position, in the words of its President, makes it a 'countervailing power', deeply committed to the defence of civil liberties and respect for the principles underpinning our rule of law.

Mr Emmanual Odo, Nigeria, said Nigeria has a bicameral legislature and all of the legislators are elected by the people. The House of Representatives is the upper chamber and the Senate is the lower chamber but they have equal opportunity in law making. Recently, a law on disability equality was passed to give people with disabilities equal opportunity to contribute to the nation. In whichever chamber a bill is introduced, it will follow the same process. Both chambers must agree on the text before it can be sent to the Executive for assent. When there is disagreement, a committee is setup with equal numbers from each house to resolve the issue. A two-thirds majority has to sign in order for it to become law.

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, said that the UK has two chambers which have sat separately since 1341, so there is a long history. As clerk of a bicameral chamber, she said there is a quality aspect to having two chambers. The House of Commons is an elected chamber, it usually has a large majority of government members. Whereas the House of Lords is appointed and a quarter of the members are nonpolitical, its members are not salaried and some have careers outside which brings in a different experience and focus. She said the nature of the difference in the membership means the two chambers take a very different approach, they complement rather than duplicate each other's work. House of Lords members' don't need to worry about re-election, they can focus on less political issues or issues not as interesting to the people. In a bicameral parliament, it is important that the two chambers don't duplicate work as that would not be good value for money.

For example, in the House of Lords select committees are careful to avoid investigating topics which the House of Commons committees' are already scrutinising. Instead, they seek to add value in places that are not studied by the

other chamber. The relative powers of two chambers are set out in statute. Although, the legislation, known as the Parliament Acts, has existed since 1911, it has only been used 5 times by the House of Commons to pass legislation without the consent of the House of Lords.

The key to avoiding deadlock, both now and before the legislation was introduced, has been in the Houses procedures for managing disagreement. Half of the bills are introduced in Lords, the other half in the Commons. When there are amendments to bills, the list is sent back and forth between the Houses in a process called 'ping pong'. The Houses must avoid double objection, so the procedures encourage the Houses to compromise rather than ignoring or doubling down. Convention holds that the House of Lords, as the non-elected chamber, will back down after a few exchanges. Usually, it backs down after 5 rounds of ping pong on amendments but on rare occasions ping pong has gone to 11 rounds of amendments.

Dr Georg Kleemann, Germany, enquired what is the speediest legislation that has been passed by both chambers?

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, said that in an emergency both Houses have previously agreed to suspend their standing orders in order to expedite legislation. However, these are usually very short bills where there is very strong political consensus. For a normal bill, she said it is impossible to get a bill through the House of Lords in less than 6 weeks and even that would be very fast.

Mr Kalipha Mm Mbye, The Gambia, indicated that the effectiveness of a parliamentary system depends in particular on the size of the country, its political environment and the strength of the institutions that support Parliament.

He recalled that The Gambia is a small country with a unicameral Parliament composed of 58 members, of whom 53 are directly elected and five appointed by the President. In the absence of a Senate or second chamber, scrutiny of the executive therefore rests on a single assembly.

He noted that this system offers advantages in terms of efficiency and the simplicity of the legislative process, since it does not require any conciliation procedure between two chambers. He nevertheless stressed that the speed of the process must not come at the expense of the quality of legislation and parliamentary scrutiny. The principal challenge is therefore to ensure that Parliament has sufficient resources to guarantee that quality.

He added that unicameralism may also present certain limitations, particularly with regard to accountability to citizens. In a bicameral system, a second chamber can help identify weaknesses in a bill, a possibility that does not exist in a unicameral

system. This situation reinforces the importance of a strong and competent parliamentary administration and increases the pressure placed on the institution and its staff.

He indicated that The Gambia's unicameral system has been strengthened in recent years and that the services of Parliament have been professionalised. It is notably the responsibility of the parliamentary administration to ensure compliance with procedures. He concluded that it did not seem possible to state, as a general rule, that bicameralism is preferable to unicameralism.

Dr Georg Kleemann, Germany asked whether the discussion about whether to have a bicameral or unicameral parliament was discussed in public.

Mr Kalipha Mm Mbye, The Gambia, replied that, from 2017 onwards, in the context of the establishment of a new Parliament and public calls for a new Constitution, a discussion had been initiated on whether to maintain one chamber or introduce two chambers. He specified that a strong majority had expressed support for retaining the unicameral system.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President informed colleagues that the Uruguayan Constitution dates from 1830 and is based on the US constitution, it is not a Federal State but the constitution is based on the bicameral model created at this time. He said, as a former Secretary General of the Senate, he has a lot experience managing negotiations between the two chambers.

In Uruguay, those who have the power to present bills are either in the Executive or members of parliament. Bills go to both chambers. In the General Assembly, it is chaired by the President or the Speaker of the Senate and they decide whether a bill is sent to one chamber or the other. If the bill is approved, it moves forward to the second chamber. If approved by both, the Executive can decide to approve it or not. Where there are amendments, it will be sent back to the first chamber. The only possibility is to accept the amendment or not, there is no possibility to make further amendments. If it is not accepted, the bill goes to the general assembly. There are two possibilities, either to accept the first bill, the amended bill or to create a new bill approved by the General Assembly. As it is a Presidential system, there is the possibility to veto the complete bill or some articles. In that case, the General Assembly could lift or approve the veto.

Mr Jean Mukuala Bateke, Democratic Republic of Congo, indicated that the parliamentary history of his country could be summarised in three phases corresponding to the three Republics. Under the First Republic, Parliament was bicameral. The difficulties encountered by the political class led to the 1965 coup

d'état and the establishment of the Second Republic, characterised by a unicameral system and a strong concentration of power.

He added that, following the change of regime in 1997, the Third Republic marked the return to bicameralism. Both chambers participate in the drafting of legislation, with the aim of improving its quality, and both exercise oversight of the executive branch. The Senate also ensures the representation of the territories. In the event of the President of the Republic being unable to perform his duties, the President of the Senate serves as acting Head of State until new elections are held.

He considered that the experience of the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrates that bicameralism promotes effectiveness, efficiency and complementarity between institutions.

He specified that, in the event of disagreement between the two chambers, a joint parity committee is convened in order to reach an agreement. The text resulting from this committee must then be adopted by both chambers.

He nevertheless noted certain difficulties associated with bicameralism. Consideration of a text by one chamber may take time, requiring the other chamber to wait before it can examine it. Similarly, when a bill adopted by the Senate is transmitted to the National Assembly, the latter may be less inclined to place it promptly on its agenda.

Finally, he noted that the Senate also plays a role in ensuring the continuity of political life by enabling certain individuals who are members of neither the Government nor the National Assembly to continue their political engagement, since senatorial elections take place after those for the National Assembly.

Ms Claressa Surtees, Australia, said that Australia has a written constitution and section 57 provides the mechanism for what happens if there is a formal disagreement between the Houses. Unless a law is passed in identical terms by both Houses, the Governor General may be able to call a double dissolution. This has only happened 7 times. On 3 occasions, the Government then lost an election afterwards. On only 1 occasion has there been a joint sitting of both Houses. She commented it is not entirely successful as a mechanism to secure the passage of legislation. In each case, the political issues may be greater than the legislative issue.

Dr Georg Kleemann, Germany, concluded by thanking everyone for their fascinating contributions.

9. 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 17.50

THIRD SITTING

Thursday 8 October 2026(morning)

Dr Georg KLEMMANN, Vice-President in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 10.10AM

1. Introductory remarks

Dr Georg KLEMMANN, Vice-President, welcomed everyone back to the plenary and informed the members he was sitting in for the President, who was away reporting to the IPU on the activities of the ASGP. He then set out how a General Debate with informal discussion groups operates and welcomed the moderator, Mr Salim Djalal, to introduce the debate.

3. GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: How is Parliament funded, and what are the processes for allocating and approving the budget?

Mr Salim DJALAL, Algeria, introduced the General Debate in the following terms:

It should be emphasized that the financing of Parliament constitutes one of the fundamental pillars that guarantees the proper functioning of the legislative institution and enables it to carry out its responsibilities and exercise its prerogatives independently and effectively.

Consideration of this issue must take into account the accounting dimension related to the preparation and implementation of the budget, as well as the need to guarantee Parliament the financial resources required to fulfil its functions. The management of these resources must comply with the legal and regulatory rules governing public expenditure and ensure their prudent use, so as to reconcile the financial autonomy of the legislative institution with the requirements of sound management of public funds.

From this perspective, the financing of Parliament, together with the preparation and implementation of its budget, falls within a legal and institutional framework based on the provisions of the Constitution, organic laws, and other applicable legislative and regulatory texts. This framework defines the principles and rules governing Parliament's financial autonomy, as well as the arrangements for managing its resources, in compliance with public finance rules.

As part of this general debate, we will address this subject by attempting to answer a series of questions:

> • *Who is responsible for preparing the parliamentary budget?*
>
> • *To what extent do parliaments have autonomy over the approval of their own budgets, and how does this affect institutional independence?*
>
> • *How does public perception shape funding decisions (for example, MPs' salaries or expensive investment in buildings)?*

****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.

Mr Armando Santos (Equatorial Guinea), rapporteur for the Spanish-speaking group, **Ms Anabela Cabral Ferreira (Portugal**), rapporteur for the Portuguese-speaking group, **Ms Sarah Davies (United Kingdom)**, rapporteur for the first English-speaking group, **Mr Ahcène Djouahra (Algeria),** rapporteur for the Arabic-speaking group, **Mr Alain Acakpo Addra (Côte d'Ivoire)**, rapporteur for the French-speaking group, and **Mr Eric Janse (Canada)**, rapporteur for the second English-speaking group, then presented the conclusions of their respective groups.***

Mr Salim Djalal, Algeria, Moderator, concluded by noting that there are many similarities in budgetary procedures. Secretaries General play a key role. The approval and implementation of budgets are often linked to government decisions, which brings us back to the question of the separation of powers. We are dependent on government budgets because we do not have our own sources of funding. Processes may vary from one parliament to another, but it can be observed that, in most parliaments, parliamentarians are involved through budget committees. This constitutes a form of parliamentary oversight.

With regard to sources of funding, Governments receive their budgets from the Treasury, with a few exceptions that seek alternative sources of funding, although such cases remain rare.

Many participants spoke about autonomy and independence. Some parliaments place pressure on the Government because the preparation of the budget is a matter of independence. In most countries, the parliamentary budget must be approved by the Government. Guarantees in favour of independence must therefore be provided, and this makes it possible to ensure genuine autonomy for our parliaments.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, found interesting the point raised by some groups concerning the maintenance of buildings entrusted to certain parliaments.

3. Concluding remarks

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

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.25

FOURTH SITTING

Wednesday 8 October 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. He reminded colleagues that speakers presenting communications would speak for 10 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of questions.

THEME: MECHANISMS FOR INTERNATIONAL AND PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION AMONG PARLIAMENTS

2. Communication: Mr Tariq Bin Waheed, Senate of Pakistan on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments'

Honourable President ASGP,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Assalam-o-Alaikum and warm greetings from Senate of Pakistan.

It is a great honour to address this distinguished gathering of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments here in Arusha. This is my third opportunity to address the ASGP Forum, having previously addressed it twice in Geneva. I am particularly honoured to be the first Secretary from Pakistan to address the ASGP on three occasions. Until now, only one Secretary of the Senate of Pakistan had addressed this forum, and that was on one occasion. I therefore see today's opportunity not only as a personal honour, but also as a reflection of the growing engagement of the Senate of Pakistan with the international parliamentary community. Speaking among colleagues responsible for the administration, continuity and effectiveness of our Parliaments, I would like to approach today's topic from a practical perspective and share what we are doing, what we are learning, and how we can strengthen cooperation among parliamentary institutions.

Distinguished colleagues,
When we speak of international and regional cooperation among Parliaments, we naturally think of Speakers' conferences, parliamentary delegations, friendship groups and political dialogue. These are important mechanisms. But effective parliamentary cooperation also depends on the institutions and parliamentary administrations that sustain these relationships beyond individual visits and political cycles.

In Pakistan, parliamentary diplomacy has an established institutional structure. The Senate of Pakistan has a dedicated International Parliamentary Relations Branch, which serves as an important channel for engagement with other Parliaments and parliamentary organisations. The Senate is connected with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, among other international and regional forums. Pakistan also chaired the Asian Parliamentary Assembly for two consecutive years, in 2013 and 2014. These institutional linkages provide the foundation. Political leadership gives them direction. Under the vision of the Chairman Senate, Hon'ble Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, parliamentary diplomacy has been placed firmly among the priorities of the Senate. This has translated into a more active programme of bilateral engagement and stronger institutional arrangements with partner Parliaments.

During the present tenure, the Senate of Pakistan has strengthened parliamentary cooperation through Memoranda of Understanding with the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, the House of Councillors of Morocco, and, most recently, the Senate of Cambodia. This engagement builds upon established parliamentary frameworks with other important partners, including the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Together, these arrangements provide a basis for parliamentary exchanges, sharing of legislative and institutional experience, capacity building, and stronger cooperation between our respective parliamentary institutions. These engagements demonstrate that parliamentary diplomacy is not limited to visits and formal meetings. Its real value lies in creating institutional mechanisms through which cooperation can continue, deepen, and produce practical outcomes. That is why Parliamentary Friendship Groups and committee-level linkages are important. They create regular channels for engagement between two Parliaments. They allow Members and parliamentary officials to understand each other's legislative practices, priorities and institutional experiences. They also make cooperation a two-way process. We do not approach these relationships simply to share our own experience.

We engage in order to understand what others are doing well and to identify practices that may be relevant to our own institutions. We have seen this in practice through the Senate's engagement with Parliaments in Europe. In 2025, Chairman Gilani led a high-level parliamentary delegation to Ireland and Austria to engage with their

Parliaments and Parliamentary Budget Offices. The delegation included Speakers of Provincial Assemblies, Members of Parliament from different political parties, and senior parliamentary officials. The engagement provided an opportunity to study established practices in parliamentary budgeting and oversight and to consider how relevant institutional experience could be adapted to Pakistan. The purpose of such engagements is not simply to maintain relations, but also to learn from one another and identify practices that can strengthen our own parliamentary institutions. The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) also contributes to this broader effort through parliamentary capacity building, professional development and the exchange of parliamentary expertise.

Distinguished colleagues,
This approach is not limited to bilateral relations. The Senate of Pakistan has also sought to create wider regional and inter-regional avenues for parliamentary cooperation. A recent example was Pakistan's initiative to bring the African region closer to our Parliament through the Pakistan-Africa Friendship Day hosted by the Senate. The initiative brought together the diplomatic representatives of African countries, including ambassadors and high commissioners, at Parliament House, alongside Members of Parliament and conveners of Parliamentary Friendship Groups. It was followed by a special Senate session and a resolution declaring 25 May as Pakistan-Africa Friendship Day. This was a distinctive step in which the Senate itself took the lead in creating a parliamentary and diplomatic platform for stronger engagement with the African region.

The same broader vision is reflected in Pakistan's commitment to South-South parliamentary cooperation. Chairman Gilani articulated this vision at the Third South-South Parliamentary Dialogue Forum in Rabat in April 2025, where he stressed the importance of coordinated action, institutional capacity-building and the exchange of successful experiences among countries of the Global South. For us, South-South cooperation is not an abstract concept. It is a practical mechanism through which developing countries can exchange solutions, strengthen institutional capacity and learn from experiences developed in comparable circumstances. This is also where the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference, or ISC, has become relevant. The Chairman Senate has assumed the role of Founding Chairman of the ISC, which was launched in Islamabad in 2025. The inaugural conference brought together parliamentary leaders from more than forty countries and international organisations. The second conference has now taken this process forward in Cambodia.

The importance of such platforms is that many of the challenges before Parliaments are no longer confined within national borders. Climate change, artificial intelligence, demographic pressures, economic inequality, food and energy security, terrorism and emerging technologies affect societies across regions. No Parliament

can address all of these challenges in isolation. The response, therefore, must also be connected. Platforms such as the ISC can complement established organisations such as the IPU and regional parliamentary bodies by creating additional spaces for dialogue, coordination and the exchange of parliamentary experience. But political-level platforms alone are not enough. This brings us back to the role of parliamentary administrations.

Distinguished colleagues,
Political leadership may establish a relationship. But parliamentary Secretariats give that relationship institutional continuity. This is why the work of Secretaries General and parliamentary officials is so important. We preserve institutional memory. We support committees. We provide research and procedural expertise. We maintain records. We develop systems. And we ensure that parliamentary cooperation continues even as political circumstances change. The Senate of Pakistan is working to strengthen these institutional capacities. Our transition towards E-Office and digital administration is aimed at making parliamentary processes faster, more transparent, accountable and secure. We are also working to strengthen parliamentary committees through improved procedures, research support, professional expertise and greater engagement with stakeholders. These are areas where international cooperation can produce very practical results. The challenges are shared. Parliaments everywhere are considering how to digitise their institutions, protect parliamentary data, preserve records, strengthen committee oversight, support Members with reliable research and adapt to emerging technologies.

We therefore need mechanisms that allow parliamentary administrations to share solutions, not merely discuss them. In my view, there are three practical ways to make international and regional parliamentary cooperation more effective.

First, we need stronger permanent channels between parliamentary institutions. Cooperation should not depend only on occasional visits or annual conferences. Regular communication between parliamentary Secretariats, friendship groups, committees and relevant branches can allow institutions to remain connected and respond to common challenges as they arise. Second, cooperation should become more targeted and practical.

Parliaments can work together on specific areas where experience is directly useful, including legislative drafting, committee procedures, parliamentary research, digital systems, staff development and institutional administration. This allows cooperation to move beyond dialogue and address the actual needs of parliamentary institutions. Third, we need stronger mechanisms for follow-up. Every major parliamentary engagement should, where appropriate, identify the next step. An MoU can lead to a staff exchange. A delegation visit can lead to committee-level cooperation. A conference can lead to a joint initiative or continued consultation. This is how

parliamentary diplomacy becomes sustained institutional cooperation rather than a series of individual engagements.

Distinguished colleagues,
The Senate of Pakistan is on a journey of institutional modernization and greater parliamentary engagement. We do not claim to have all the answers. But we believe that Parliament-to-Parliament cooperation becomes meaningful when it moves beyond ceremonial engagement and creates lasting institutional relationships. The objective is simple. Political leaders build political bridges. Parliamentary institutions build institutional bridges. And parliamentary administrations make those bridges durable. If we can share our knowledge, our technology, our expertise and our institutional solutions, then cooperation among Parliaments becomes more than an exchange of visits. It becomes a mechanism for strengthening the institutions themselves.

That, ultimately, is the value of international and regional parliamentary cooperation. I look forward to working with all of you to make the ASGP an even stronger community of parliamentary institutions, where experience is shared, innovation is encouraged, and every Parliament can benefit from the experience of others. Thank you very much.

3. Communication: Mr António Mahumane, Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments'

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

It is with great honour and respect that I address you at this prestigious forum, and I would, first, like to take this opportunity to convey warm greetings from Honorable Margarida Adamugi Talapa, Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, who has unequivocally supported our work, and hereby wishes all of us here gathering, a successful 2nd Meeting of the ASGP 2026.
Dear colleagues,

Allow me, above all, to thank the People and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for the warm welcome they have extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful country.

I take this opportunity to communicate that, soon after learning of the holding of yet another meeting of our Association in this welcoming and charming city of Arusha, I resolved to deliver this communication on “Mechanisms for Regional and International Cooperation among Parliaments”, from the Parliament of the Republic of Mozambique perspective.

I would like to share our experience in this matter, first by noting that, as part of parliamentary diplomacy, the Parliament of Mozambique, based on the principles established in our country's foreign policy and international cooperation strategy, uses parliamentary cooperation mechanisms structured at bilateral, regional and international levels.

In terms of bilateral cooperation, through Cooperation Protocols signed at the highest level of Parliament, we have formally established partnership relations with other parliaments, aimed at exchanging experiences in the legislative, representative and oversight spheres, as well as providing technical assistance, training and institutional capacity-building. Currently, the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique has Cooperation Protocols in force with the parliaments of South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Brazil, China, Cuba, India, Portugal, Rwanda, Russia, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

Additionally, as part of bilateral cooperation, the Parliament of Mozambique presently has 50 Parliamentary Friendship Groups, which, pursuant to the Rules of Procedure, should consist of elected Members of Parliament whose mandate is to strengthen ties of friendship, solidarity and cooperation with other parliaments. Specifically, the Parliamentary Friendship, Solidarity and Cooperation Groups have the following objectives:

- Promote the strengthening of friendship, solidarity and cooperation relations between Mozambique and other countries;
- Influence the respective States and international organisations to adopt policies and measures that promote democracy, stability, peace, and social, economic and cultural development; and
- Advance, at bilateral and multilateral levels, the exchange of experiences in the parliamentary sphere, as well as in other areas of common interest.

Dear Secretaries-General,
Concerning regional parliamentary cooperation, the Parliament of Mozambique forges links with regional and continental blocs, seeking synergies to tackle regional and continental challenges and uphold common interests. It is in this context that the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique is a full member of both the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF), which brings together the national parliaments of the SADC Member States, and the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), a legislative body of the African Union.

At international parliamentary cooperation level, the Assembly of the Republic is a full member of the following international organisations: the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU); the Joint Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States – European Union (JPA OACPS-EU); the

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA); the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement; the Parliamentary Assembly of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (AP-CPLP), of which it currently holds the presidency; and the Parliamentary Union of the Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (PUIC). It is therefore in these forums that, through political dialogue, our parliament has learnt and shared best practices on promoting democratic governance and the values inherent in democracy, as well as on cross-cutting issues such as peace, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action and sustainable development.

Allow me to add that, at the Secretariat-General of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, a Division known as the Public and International Relations Division is established, whose mandate is specifically to provide support to the Parliament's public and international business, and this Division is directly accountable to the Secretary-General.

Mr. President,
Esteemed Colleagues,
I have just outlined the Mechanisms for Parliamentary Cooperation adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique.
Please accept my thanks for your attention, as I remain entirely at your disposal should you require any further clarification.

4. Communication: Dr Silke Albin, German Bundestag on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments'

As in many other countries, the German Bundestag maintains numerous formal relations with other parliaments. These include cooperations with neighbours in the region, as well as international formats with like-minded parliaments. A globally unique bilateral assembly has been established held with France, which will be looked at in greater detail below.

I. Conference formats at political level

The German Bundestag is a member of many conference formats at the political level of parliamentary presidents and/or members of parliament. The following provides an overview of the most important:

1. Conference of Speakers Meetings according to format:
• Every five years: World Conference hosted by the IPU (most recently 2025);

• Since 2000: annual Conference of Speakers of the G7 Member States (G8 until 2013);
• Since 1973: European Conference of Presidents of Parliament every two years;
• Since 1963 (annually since 1975): Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (EUSC); candidate and potential candidate countries participate as guests

2. NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA)
• Founded in 1955: Germany has been a member since 1955.
• Focus: o Accompanying the work of intergovernmental organisation NATO.
o Discussion forum with 281 parliamentarians from the 32 NATO Member States on security and defence topics;
o Promotion of transatlantic solidarity.

• Assemblies: twice a year. 30 September 2026 17:10hrs
• Specific characteristics:
o Within the NATO PA there are informal political groups who meet on the margins of the plenary sessions
o The Rose-Roth Programme (since 1990), previously: exclusively for parliaments from central and Eastern Europe, promoting the principle of democratic oversight of the armed forces and the establishing of effective parliamentary oversight of defence and military, now: open to non-NATO states, enhancing parliamentary awareness, conveying expertise;
o Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum (since 2001) for the promotion of transatlantic dialogue;

3. Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA)
• Founded in 1990.
• Focus: 323 members from 56 states (Europe, Asia, North America) debate among other topics on the development and promotion of mechanisms to prevent and resolve conflicts.
• Meetings: annual session + “winter meeting”
• Specific characteristics: o OSCE Chair is obligated to maintain close contact with the PA and inform it of the activities of the OSCE.
o The OSCE PA has at its disposal various programmes, including an election observation programme and various seminars on the development and strengthening of democracy;
o Deployment of special missions to problem or crisis regions.

4. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
• Council of Europe founded on 5 May 1949, Germany obtained associate membership on 13 July 1950, full membership on 2 May 1951.

• 46 member states, 306 parliamentarians. • German delegation: 18 Members of the Bundestag.
• Sittings: 4 sitting weeks each year • Specific characteristics:
    o The PA is an organ of the Council of Europe. o There are five parliamentary groups
    o PA elects the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the justices of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)
    o Carries out election observation
    o Oversees compliance with member state obligations (referred to as monitoring)

5. Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)
• Founded in 1991.
• German delegation: 5 Members of the Bundestag.
• Assemblies: annual.
• Focus:
    o Parliamentary counterpart to the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS); o Strengthening the Baltic Sea Region's shared identity;
    o Initiating and following-up political activities in the region (environmental, maritime security, economic, social);
    o Supporting and strengthening democratic institutions in the member states.

• Specific characteristics:
    o Members and national and regional parliaments (for Germany not only the German Bundestag but also the parliaments of the north German federal states) and autonomous regions;
    o Arctic Ocean states and regions use the BSPC as a platform to emphasise their sovereignty.

6. ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)
    • Founded in 1977; the German Bundestag has observer status since 2024.
    • Aim: Promoting relations between the parliaments of the ASEAN member states, the observer member parliaments and other parliamentary organisations.
    • The AIPA meets annually for a general assembly.
    • Specific characteristics: A central function of the AIPA is to explain the policies of the ASEAN states to the population.

II. International Parliamentary Cooperation In addition, the Bundestag maintains intensive parliamentary peer-to-peer exchanges with other parliaments.

Through these International Parliamentary Cooperation (IPK) programmes, expert exchange formats on a variety of parliamentary topics are held, such as on the fundamental workings of the plenary and the committees, the budget process or the work of the Research Services.

Yet topics such as corruption prevention, the use of artificial intelligence and the involvement of young people in parliamentary processes also play an increasingly important role.

A core element of the IPK programmes is cooperation in the form of online events, visit programmes over several days (around six times a year) in Berlin or even on-site expert missions. The design of all cooperation projects follows the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)'s "Common Principles for Support to Parliaments". Great value is also placed on exchange between colleagues on an equal footing, known as the peer-to-peer approach.

This is primarily addressed towards administration employees, but also Members of the German Bundestag and the partner parliament.

In 2026, the German Bundestag has worked with around twenty international parliaments within the framework of the IPK. These include parliaments from the states in the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Central Asia, as well as Zambia and Thailand. Cooperation takes place bilaterally or multilaterally and in many cases with the support of national and international partners, such as political foundations, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), INTER PARES and many more.

III. Assessment

• This mutual exchange brings direct added value for each Parliament's own work.
• The German Bundestag faces similar challenges to its partner parliaments, including approaches to AI technology, digitalisation, modern formats of youth participation and staff recruitment.
• Exchanges on best practices lead to shifts in perspective, new ideas and real change.
• The Speakers' conferences and parliamentary assemblies can also act as open communication channels in times of crisis or political upheaval.
• Further development of in-house staff in the Bundestag Administration: Exchanges between colleagues improve intercultural skills and understanding of each other.
• Knowledge growth: Specialist, intercultural, language skills, new methods and ideas.
• The view of the individual area of work is broadened.
• Advantage of bilateral formats: There is an atmosphere of greater trust, with the option of taking a more in-depth look at specific topics or ones tailored to the respective parliament.

• Advantage of multilateral formats:
    o Multiplier effects, in other words a whole different range of topics and the involvement of a larger number of groups.
    o Cooperation within the region (keyword: contributing towards the process of reconciliation) is strengthened.
    o Increased output with the same effort
    o Initiatives provided for further development of existing bilateral cooperations in the region. o Network effects

IV. Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly
One special feature of our parliamentary cooperation is the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly (DFPV).

1. What is the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly?

• The DFPV is the only joint parliament between two countries worldwide. It has its own legal basis (the Franco-German Parliamentary Agreement and the Rules of Procedure for the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly).

• It has 100 members: 50 Members of the German Bundestag and 50 Members of the Assemblée nationale. The national parliamentary groups are each represented in proportion to their size in the German Bundestag and the Assemblée nationale. The Parliamentary Presidents from Germany and France chair the assembly.

• Since 2019, the Assembly has met at least twice a year, alternating between Germany and France. In addition, the executive committee generally meets six times a year under the leadership of the two co-chairs.

• A core element of the assembly sittings are hearings of government ministers and deliberating tabled decisions.

• Alongside the meetings of the assembly there are several smaller formats (working groups, short-term missions), which enable parliamentary work throughout the entire year and which report orally and in writing to the assembly.

2. Experiences

• General experiences: o There is intensive active involvement by the members, with a great number taking part in meetings of the DFPV. Moreover, a consistently rising number of substantial contributions can be observed, particularly in terms of draft decisions.
    o The DFPV continues to develop dynamically, most recently with the introduction of the new instrument of short-term missions, with the aim of

dealing with topics at shorter notice, more topically and faster (the report is brought to the Assembly after three months). Furthermore, the Assembly's Rules of Procedure were adapted in order to facilitate its parliamentary work.
• Comparison with multilateral formats:

o In formal terms, the Members of the DFPV are not official delegation members to a parliamentary assembly, but instead Members of an independent parliament with its own legal basis.

o The work is more focused on binational topics and the bilateral dimension of European topics (such as defence, energy security, digitalisation). o The personal Franco-German exchange between the Members is closer and, as a result of the shared work on drafts and in the working groups / short-term missions, more consistent.

o The discussions lead to a greater understanding for the positions of the other country. In this way, within Franco-German relations (the "motor of Europe"), the parliamentary exchange in the DFPV, with its debates and decision-taking, accompanies the work at bilateral government level and provides key impetuses for this.

Ms Sarah Davies, UK, noted there is a body called the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Assembly which was created in 1990 and continues to this day. She remarked it is a good example of neighbouring countries, with a long and complicated history, working together. It operates via 4 committees and bi-annual plenary debates. She remarked that MPs who have participated have found it very valuable and it has deepened their knowledge and understanding. She noted all parliaments have increasing pressure to cut costs and, althought international work is very valuable, it comes at a high financial cost which can be misunderstood by the public. She asked how Silke would defend and uphold the value of international work for MPs and staff to the public and the media?

Mr Philippe Brichu, Canada, observed that everyone in the room understands the importance of diplomacy and international relations but there is often criticism in the media. He said Canadian MPs are often going from somewhere cold to somewhere warm and particular journalists criticise this heavily. He also asked how Silke has defended this to the media and public in terms of climate cost and financial cost of travel for Members and staff.

Mr Kyrre GRIMSTAD, Norway, informed colleagues that a regional community was created between 5 Nordic countries in 1952. It is a type of parliament, it has a

general session every year in October, 87 members drawn from the national parliaments and several committees which meet a few times a year. It is a very active regional forum for Nordic cooperation. It is has led to cooperation on legislative matters and ensures better coordination on shared concerns. On the point about public perceptions, he said the forum is most famous for giving out prizes for literature, movies and kids' books which are quite prestigious. He remarked this is also helps to bring culture in the Nordic countries closer together.

Mr Jeremiah NYEGENYE, Kenya, shared that countries in East Africa have the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) whose headquarters is in Arusha. He said that every year they have an East African interparliamentary games for 2 weeks in which legislators from the countries meet and hold a mini-world cup. He said in the beginning there was a lot of criticism of the games as a waste of money but, it is now in its 16th year and has become very popular. The games are even now televised on in some member countries. He remarked it has really helped bring MPs together among the 8 countries who are members of EALA.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, remarked on parliamentary diplomacy that two meetings of the IPU have been held in Bali in recent years. However, the IPU never said it was going to be held in Bali, instead they advertised that the meetings would be held in Nusa Dua or Denpasser, which are specific areas in Bali. He remarked the event was entitled like this to avoid allegations from the media because Bali is a famous holiday destination. In Uruguay, he said an MP has introduced a Bill forbidding all travel by Members and arguing that this is what foreign offices are for, Members should not need to travel to get this information.

Dr Silke Albin, Germany, thanked colleagues for their contributions and remarked that she would bring their ideas back to her parliament. In response to questions regarding cost pressure and media focus on travel for MPs and secretariat, she said Members should be sensitive about what they put on social media during visits. However, also that Secretaries General should be self-conscious about encouraging and defending staff and Members need to go abroad and learn new things. She said there is a clear benefit, you can't measure it easily, but Secretaries General should have the courage to defend this benefit to journalists. It is a significant responsibility. She concluded that in the Bundestag there is a transparency report each year, which sets out where Members have been and what it costs, so this is at least clear for journalists but should not undermine the principle of visits.

5. Communication: Mr Golam Sorwar Bhuiyan, Parliament of Bangladesh on 'Mechanisms for international and regional cooperation among Parliaments'

Democratic Purpose of Parliamentary Cooperation

Parliaments give democratic meaning to international cooperation. Governments negotiate treaties, declarations and common programmes, but parliaments connect those commitments to citizens through debate, legislation, public finance and oversight. International and regional cooperation among parliaments therefore has a practical purpose: it enables elected institutions to understand shared problems, compare solutions and ensure that commitments made beyond national borders can lead to accountable action at home.

Why Cross-Border Parliamentary Cooperation Matters

This purpose has become more important as national legislatures address challenges that no country can manage in isolation. Climate change, migration, public health emergencies, digital governance, transnational crime, economic shocks and threats to peace cross borders rapidly. Executive institutions already cooperate extensively in these fields. Parliaments need equally reliable channels so that international decisions receive democratic scrutiny, reflect diverse public interests and remain connected to domestic constitutional processes.

Levels of Parliamentary Cooperation

Parliamentary cooperation operates at several connected levels. At the global level, the Inter-Parliamentary Union provides the broadest platform for dialogue among national parliaments and links parliamentary perspectives with the United Nations and other multilateral processes. Regional institutions adapt common priorities to their own legal and political settings. Bilateral friendship groups, committee partnerships and thematic networks provide a more focused layer of cooperation. These levels are most effective when they reinforce one another rather than function as separate calendars of meetings.

Regional Models of Cooperation

Regional models illustrate the variety of available mechanisms. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe works through resolutions, recommendations, opinions and monitoring within a treaty-based regional system. The Pan-African Parliament combines debate, recommendations and model laws as an organ of the African Union. The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly uses its General Assembly, committees, caucuses and resolutions in a consensus-oriented regional setting. ParlAmericas relies on thematic networks, policy dialogue and practical tools, while the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association places strong emphasis on professional development, democratic benchmarks and peer learning. These models differ in mandate, but each demonstrates how parliamentary cooperation can be adapted to institutional context.

Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy is one of the most visible mechanisms. Speakers, members and parliamentary delegations can sustain dialogue where formal

diplomatic channels are constrained. Their discussions are often less rigid and can create room for confidence building, fact finding and a better understanding of the political concerns behind official positions. Parliamentary diplomacy does not replace the constitutional role of the executive in foreign relations. It complements that role by adding plural political voices, legislative knowledge and direct links to the people represented by parliament.

Inclusive and Effective Parliamentary Delegations

For parliamentary diplomacy to produce lasting value, participation should reflect the diversity of parliament. Government and opposition members, women, young parliamentarians and representatives of relevant committees should have meaningful opportunities to contribute. Delegations also need a clear mandate, timely briefing and an agreed method for reporting back. Without these arrangements, even a successful international meeting may remain disconnected from the institution that sent the delegation.

Committee-Level Cooperation

A second mechanism is cooperation through committees. Committees can compare legislation, exchange evidence, hold joint or parallel hearings and examine how governments implement international obligations. Foreign affairs committees may coordinate the overall relationship, while sectoral committees carry the substantive work on climate, health, trade, human rights, peace or security. This division of responsibility connects international dialogue with the ordinary machinery of parliament and reduces dependence on occasional high-level events.

International Instruments and Domestic Translation

International parliamentary instruments usually take the form of resolutions, recommendations, declarations, model provisions or committee reports. Their legal effect depends on each country's Constitution and parliamentary procedure. The central challenge is therefore domestic translation. A resolution may need referral to a committee. A recommendation may require a compatibility review, a bill, an amendment, a budget allocation or a formal government response. A model law can assist national drafting, but it must be adapted to local constitutional requirements and legislative practice.

Institutional Follow-up and Parliamentary Ownership

The strongest cooperation mechanisms identify this domestic route from the beginning. Every agreed output should have a parliamentary owner, a reasonable timetable and a reporting process. Secretariats can maintain a register recording the commitment, the responsible committee, action taken and matters still pending. This simple institutional practice helps preserve continuity when delegations, office holders or political priorities change, and it creates an institutional memory that can be used by future members and officials.

Oversight of International Commitments

Oversight is another field in which cooperation can add practical value. Parliaments can develop shared evidence about whether governments have implemented treaties, regional decisions or global pledges. Committees can map a commitment, examine the relevant law and budget, question responsible ministries, use audit findings and compare results with other countries. Peer review makes it easier to identify implementation gaps and tested responses, while public reporting

allows citizens to see what progress has been made.Sustainable Development and Global Commitments

The Sustainable Development Goals illustrate this connection. International objectives do not implement themselves. They require legislation, appropriations, administrative action and reliable data. Parliamentary cooperation can help committees compare indicators, budget approaches and oversight methods, but national parliaments must determine the measures that fit their own circumstances. The same principle applies to climate commitments, human rights obligations and measures relating to peace and security.

Capacity Building and Peer Learning

Capacity building and peer learning are equally important. Comparative research, staff exchanges, study visits and networks of committee secretaries can improve procedure and institutional memory. Parliaments can share methods for legislative research, budget analysis, digital participation, record management and services for members. Such cooperation should strengthen the institution between assemblies, not merely support attendance at them. Knowledge platforms and secure digital tools can keep this exchange active throughout the year.

Role of the Parliament Secretariat

The parliament secretariat has a central responsibility in this process. It provides the administrative continuity that elected leadership and delegations require. A permanent international affairs unit or designated focal point can coordinate memberships, prepare briefs, preserve records, support committees and monitor follow-up. The secretariat should also ensure translation, protocol, secure communication and equal access to relevant information. These functions turn cooperation from an individual activity into an institutional one.

Perspective of the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat

From the perspective of the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat, international parliamentary engagement should be closely linked to national parliamentary work. Bangladesh participates in global and regional parliamentary forums and values dialogue among legislatures. The Secretariat's responsibility is to support the Speaker, members and delegations with impartial professional services, while ensuring that knowledge and commitments arising from international engagement can reach the appropriate committees and administrative units. This approach is particularly relevant to developing-country priorities such as climate vulnerability, sustainable development, disaster resilience, migration, public health and inclusive growth.

Institutional Rules for Effective Cooperation

Effective cooperation also requires clear institutional rules. The mandate, membership, decision-making process and relationship with national parliaments should be explicit. Representation should be plural and inclusive. Documents should be available in time and, where necessary, in languages participants can use effectively. Funding and administrative responsibilities should be transparent. Records of decisions should remain accessible, subject to legitimate requirements of confidentiality and security.

Risks and Practical Safeguards

Several risks deserve attention. Cooperation may become ceremonial if there is no committee connection or domestic follow-up. A narrow delegation may fail to reflect the range of parliamentary views. Overlapping organisations can duplicate work and consume limited resources. Unequal access to language, technology or funding can prevent some parliaments from participating fully. Weak records can also cause progress to be lost when members or officials change. These risks can be reduced through annual priorities, coordinated participation, concise pre-mission and post-mission briefs, committee referral, shared repositories and periodic evaluation.

The Cooperation-to-Action Cycle

A useful cooperation-to-action cycle has five connected stages. First, parliament defines the mandate and prepares its national position. Second, delegates deliberate with access to evidence and the views of affected groups. Third, the forum adopts an instrument that identifies responsibility and timing. Fourth, the parliament localizes the outcome through its committees, legislative process, budget work or oversight. Fifth, it monitors implementation, reports progress and adjusts its approach. At every stage there should be a named institutional owner and a visible record of decisions.

A Practical Standard for Evaluating Cooperation

A practical standard for evaluating cooperation can be built around six questions. Is the mandate clear? Does representation reflect parliamentary pluralism and inclusion? Are committees connected to the work between meetings? Does each output have a domestic pathway? Are results measured against visible indicators? Are decisions, funding and progress sufficiently transparent? These questions respect the constitutional autonomy of each parliament while promoting consistent institutional quality and meaningful follow-through.

Implementation through Achievable Steps

Implementation can begin with modest and achievable steps. During the first phase, a parliament can map its international and regional memberships and designate an accountable focal point. It can then establish a common delegation brief and a protocol for committee referral. The next objective should be to translate at least one agreed international output into a concrete domestic action, such as an oversight hearing, a budget examination, a legislative proposal or an institutional reform. At the end of the cycle, the parliament can publish a progress review and approve priorities for the following year.

Conclusion

International and regional parliamentary cooperation succeeds when it strengthens the daily work of parliament. Dialogue is essential, but its value increases when it informs legislation, finance and oversight. Strong secretariats, connected committees, inclusive participation and clear follow-up arrangements provide the institutional bridge between international agreement and domestic accountability. The diversity of constitutional systems means that no single model can be imposed on every parliament. Nevertheless, common principles can guide us: clarity of mandate, respect for national procedure, reliable institutional support and transparent results. Through these principles, parliamentary cooperation can remain internationally engaged while firmly accountable to the citizens whom parliaments serve.

Ms Sarah Davies, United Kingdom, asked whether the Parliament of Bangladesh had considered introducing accountability mechanisms to ensure that the recommendations made were followed up and implemented?

Mr Golam Sorwar Bhuiyan, Bangladesh responded that he shared the United Kingdom's analysis and that the establishment of accountability mechanisms was essential. He stressed that international law is founded on respect for treaties and that it was vital to ensure that commitments are honoured.

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

6. Communication: Ms Le Thu Ha, National Assembly of Vietnam, on 'Parliament in institutional reform: Viet Nam's Experience in Reshaping the State and Local Governance'

Mr President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments,
Distinguished Secretaries General,
Dear colleagues,
At the outset, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the President and Secretariat of ASGP, and to our hosts in the United Republic of Tanzania, for their warm welcome and thoughtful arrangements here in Arusha.
It is a great pleasure to join you once again at ASGP session.

Today, I would like to share Viet Nam's experience in a reform that is still under way: the restructuring of the State apparatus and the nationwide reorganisation of local government.

Within a relatively short period, one level of local government ceased to operate; thousands of administrative units were rearranged; powers and responsibilities were reassigned; and a number of State institutions, including the National Assembly and its Office, were reorganised. Throughout this transition, the work of the State and Parliament had to continue without interruption.
This brought us face to face with a practical question:

How can we transform institutions while ensuring that the State continues to function and serve the people?

This question lies at the heart of our reform. Its purpose is to build institutions that are more capable and more responsive to the needs of the people.

Streamlining is not simply about having fewer institutions. It is about building more capable institutions.

Distinguished colleagues,
The context for this reform is the profound transformation Viet Nam has experienced over nearly four decades of Đổi Mới. Our economy has expanded, urbanisation has accelerated and international integration has deepened. Digital technologies are changing both the way the State operates and the way citizens interact with public institutions.

Our system of governance, meanwhile, had developed over successive periods. In some areas, intermediate layers remained numerous, mandates overlapped, and the decentralisation of authority was not always accompanied by adequate resources or clear accountability.

The reform therefore addresses more than institutional mergers or administrative boundaries. It asks where decisions can best be made, who should be responsible for them, and what capacity, resources and data are needed to exercise the authority entrusted to each level.

The rearrangement of administrative units also aims to create units of an appropriate scale, connect infrastructure and resources more effectively, and bring complementary development strengths together. In this way, institutional reform can open up new space for development and support more effective governance.
The scale of change is substantial. The number of provincial-level administrative units has been reduced from 63 to 34, and the country now has 3,321 commune-level units. District-level government has ceased to operate. Since 1 July 2025, local government in Viet Nam has been organised at two levels: provincial and commune.

At this gathering of parliamentary leaders and administrators, I wish to emphasise that the National Assembly has itself been an integral part of this reform.

The number of bodies of the National Assembly was reduced from 13 to 8. The Office of the National Assembly, which advises and supports Parliament in the exercise of its functions, was reorganised from 29 to 9 subordinate units.

The National Assembly thus faced a dual responsibility: to provide the legal foundation for restructuring the State, while undertaking its own institutional reform.

It amended and supplemented certain provisions of the Constitution and revised the legal framework governing the organisation of the National Assembly, the Government and local government. The National Assembly decided on the rearrangement of provincial-level administrative units; its Standing Committee decided on the rearrangement of commune-level units.

This dual responsibility underscored a fundamental principle: reform must preserve legal certainty and the uninterrupted exercise of State authority.
When a level of government ceases to operate, its responsibilities do not disappear. Powers must be transferred, records and data handed over, and personnel and resources reassigned. Above all, the delivery of public services and the rights of citizens must be safeguarded throughout the transition.

Institutions may change, but the continuity of the State must be preserved.
Distinguished colleagues,
Allow me to turn to an aspect of this experience that speaks directly to our work at ASGP: the administration of Parliament during a period of institutional change. While the National Assembly and its Office were substantially streamlined, the demands placed upon them remained considerable. In 2025 alone, the National Assembly of Viet Nam adopted 89 laws and 91 resolutions - more than 40% of all laws and resolutions adopted during the 15th National Assembly's term.

In two sessions held thus far in the 16th National Assembly's term, it has adopted 24 laws and 11 resolutions containing legal norms. At a forthcoming session, it is expected to consider 46 legislative matters and 10 groups of matters relating to socioeconomic development, the State budget, oversight and other issues of national importance.

These figures illustrate the challenge before parliamentary administrations: as structures become leaner, the volume, complexity and importance of parliamentary work remain high.

The Office of the National Assembly had to sustain support for legislation, oversight, decisions on major national issues and other parliamentary functions, while reorganising its own units, mandates, procedures and personnel.

We had to help reform the State while reforming ourselves - without stopping the work of Parliament.

Our experience has shown that reducing the number of organisational units is only a first step. The more demanding task is to redesign functions and workflows and strengthen the capacity of the institution that emerges.

A smaller parliamentary administration must not mean a less capable Parliament.

Local government faces a comparable challenge. Following the end of district-level government, responsibilities previously handled across three levels have been reassigned between the provincial and commune levels. Communes now cover larger areas, exercise broader powers and assume more direct responsibilities.

A larger administrative area must never translate into greater distance between government and citizens. The removal of an intermediate layer should enable decisions to be taken more promptly, responsibilities to be defined more clearly and public services to be accessed more easily.

The transfer of powers must therefore be accompanied by the means to exercise them. Our initial experience points to three requirements:
Capacity must accompany authority.
Resources must follow responsibilities.
And data must be available wherever authority is exercised.

These requirements explain why digital transformation is integral to institutional reform. With fewer intermediate layers, information and workflows must move more directly between levels of government. Information systems need to be connected, and officials at the grassroots level need the skills to use them effectively.

Initial results are emerging as the new arrangements take effect. Nationwide, citizen satisfaction with services provided by State administrative agencies reached 83.09%. Since 2025, administrative procedure reforms have reduced processing times by more than 51% and compliance costs by nearly 60%.

In Ha Noi, more than 2.26 million administrative applications have been processed under delegated and authorised procedures, with nearly 96% completed on time or ahead of schedule.

These are early results, reflecting several reforms pursued in parallel. We therefore assess them with due caution. They nevertheless point to a vital measure of success: the time, cost and effort saved for citizens, and the quality of the services they receive.

We are equally mindful of the work that remains. Capacity at the grassroots level is uneven; the allocation and delegation of powers require further refinement; information systems do not always connect seamlessly; and personnel and resources must continue to be aligned with new responsibilities.

Institutional reform does not conclude when a new organisational chart is approved. The lasting test is whether the new arrangements enable institutions to perform their duties more effectively.

Distinguished colleagues,
Three principles stand out from our experience. The first is continuity. Reform requires a strong and timely legal foundation so that authority, responsibility and public services remain clear throughout the transition.

The second is capacity. Streamlining must go hand in hand with the redesign of functions and procedures and with the skills needed to implement them.
The third is accountability. Decentralisation will achieve its purpose only when authority is matched by capacity, resources, access to data and responsibility for results.

Together, continuity, capacity and accountability serve the essential objective of reform: tangible improvements in the lives of the people.

If institutions become smaller while citizens wait longer for services, or if administrative layers are removed while responsibility becomes harder to identify, the reform will not have fulfilled that objective.

Distinguished colleagues,
Viet Nam's reform is still under way, and we continue to learn from its implementation. We share this experience in a spirit of dialogue, recognising that each country has its own constitutional framework, history and traditions of governance.

For those of us entrusted with supporting the work of Parliament, the reform raises a question of particular importance.

As the structure of the State evolves, Parliament must provide the legal framework for change, oversee its implementation and safeguard accountability. It must also be prepared to renew its own institutions and ways of working.

The challenge for parliamentary administrations is therefore this:
How can a leaner parliamentary administration enable a stronger, better informed and more responsive Parliament - one that remains close to the people?

If we meet that challenge, streamlining will bring a qualitative improvement in the way our institutions work.
It will become institutional transformation.

I hope that Viet Nam's experience will make a useful contribution to our exchange of ideas at ASGP.
Thank you for your attention.

Mr Andrés Salas, Chile asked what measures were being implemented in Vietnam in the areas of accountability and transparency. He noted that, in Chile, all parliamentary expenditure was made public and asked whether comparable arrangements existed in Vietnam. He also asked how Parliament informed the public about the measures being taken to enhance transparency.

Ms Le Thu Ha, Vietnam stated that, in Vietnam, the challenge was not so much to reduce the number of institutions as to ensure that the new structures were able to fully assume their responsibilities and carry out their functions, with sufficient resources at their disposal. She stressed the need to take into account the practical consequences of reforms, particularly in order to ensure the continuity of the various services.

She also noted that the costs arising from reforms were not always immediately visible and that it was important to highlight them. Finally, she emphasized that the development of digital services should help bring citizens closer to public institutions.

7. Communication: Mr Dan Marzouk, Knesset of Israel, on 'When Everything Changes Overnight: Parliamentary Resilience in Times of Crisis'

Wars, large-scale terrorist attacks, cyberattacks, earthquakes, and other extreme events do not only challenge the executive branch and the security services. Crises of this kind can, within a very short period of time, fundamentally alter the operating environment of all state institutions, including the parliament.

It is precisely in times of crisis that a parliament is called upon to play a central role: to advance urgent legislation, approve exceptional budgets, oversee the actions of the government, scrutinize the use of emergency powers, and give voice to the needs and concerns of the public. The ability of a parliament to continue functioning under exceptional circumstances is therefore not merely an organizational or operational matter. It is a prerequisite for a viable system of government and democracy.

From our experience, parliamentary resilience in times of crisis rests on three principles:

1. Continuity of operations
2. Adapting parliamentary activity to changing circumstances
3. The ability to return to normal parliamentary functioning when the conditions allow

The First Principle: Continuity of Operations

Parliamentary resilience begins with a basic institutional decision: a parliament must be able to continue functioning even under the most difficult circumstances.

This decision has clear practical implications. When a country is facing a serious crisis, the need to legislate and oversee the actions of the executive branch only increases. The executive is required to make decisions rapidly, exercise exceptional powers, and allocate substantial resources. At precisely such a time, a parliament that is unable to function may create an institutional vacuum, leaving the executive with broad powers without adequate oversight and accountability.

Continuity of operations also has public and symbolic significance. When a parliament continues to convene and carry out its work during a crisis, it conveys stability, continuity of government, and democratic resilience. In this sense, parliamentary resilience is itself part of a country's national resilience.

However, a principled decision to continue functioning is not enough. It must be translated in advance into detailed organizational and operational preparations. Every parliament should consider, during routine times, questions such as: Can the plenary chamber and committee rooms continue to operate during an emergency? Are alternative locations available for meetings? Can IT and voting systems operate from those locations? Which staff members are essential to maintaining parliamentary operations, and what arrangements are in place if some of them are unable to reach parliament? How many people can safely be present on parliamentary premises during an emergency? Is there an immediate capacity, if necessary, to hold proceedings by videoconference?

For the majority of the emergency period, the Knesset Plenum continued to meet in its regular chamber. However, on two occasions when security conditions required it, plenary sessions were moved to an alternative chamber on the Knesset grounds, adjacent to a designated protected space. On one of these occasions, the Knesset was required to approve the state budget, a process involving hundreds of electronic votes. The computerized system used to manage plenary proceedings was therefore transferred to the alternative chamber, allowing the Plenum to continuing operating fully from its new location. Committee meetings were also moved, when necessary,

to protected rooms or rooms adjacent to protected spaces. At certain points, the number of people permitted to enter the Knesset was also limited, ensuring that, if necessary, everyone present could be evacuated quickly and safely to protected areas.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many parliaments were required to rapidly develop capacity to hold meetings by videoconference and to operate in hybrid formats. These capabilities have since proven equally relevant in security emergencies.

During a war or significant armed conflict, another possibility must also be taken into account: the parliament itself may become a target, both because of its physical importance and because of its symbolic significance as a central institution of government.

In Israel, responsibility for securing the Knesset lies with the Knesset Guard, an independent security unit under the authority of the Speaker of the Knesset. In recent years, the Knesset has expanded its capacity to address a wide range of threats, including cyber threats and various forms of physical threat.

The lesson in this regard is clear: continuity of operations depends not only on facilities, IT systems, and procedures. It also requires the ability the protect the institution itself and the people needed to keep it functioning.

The Second Principle: Adapting Parliamentary Activity

Once a parliament has ensured that it can continue functioning, another question arises: How should it operate during a crisis?

The goal is not to continue working exactly as the parliament did under normal circumstances. In extreme scenarios, parliamentary activity must be adapted to the new reality and to the limited resources available to the institution. For the Knesset, this meant moving from an approach of "maximum activity" to one of "maximum effectiveness."

During a crisis, an effective parliament is not necessarily one that holds more meetings or addresses more issues. It is one that identifies the most urgent priorities and directs its parliamentary resources toward them.

In practice, the Knesset's plenary agenda was significantly reduced. Initiatives that were not essential were postponed, and discussions focused primarily on issues arising from the war and its impact on civilian life. Activities outside the core work of parliament, such as events, ceremonies, and group visits, were suspended.

At the same time, the center of parliamentary activity shifted to a significant degree toward the Knesset committees. The committees were almost the only forum in which government ministries, local authorities, security agencies, civil society organizations, and public representatives could sit around the same table to address the urgent challenges created by the war. The work of the committees made it possible to identify gaps and needs quickly, obtain information from the government and public bodies, and bring together officials who were not coordinating sufficiently on the ground.

The intensity of committee activity also created a major organizational and managerial challenge. The Knesset had 25 committees operating simultaneously. Without a coordination mechanism, there was a risk that different committees would address the same issues: welfare, education, health, protection, and other civilian matters, and repeatedly invite the same government officials and relevant stakeholders.

This would have resulted not only in duplication and a waste of resources, but also in a real burden for government ministries and authorities that were themselves required to manage the crisis.

To address this, a dedicated mechanism was established to coordinate the work of the committees. Every request for a committee meeting was professionally assessed: Had the issue already been discussed? Was another committee expected to address it? Was there duplication among the invited participants? And would it be more appropriate to hold a joint meeting of two or more committees?

Measures of this kind naturally raise procedural and democratic questions. The Knesset temporarily curtailed the use of some parliamentary tools, and the need for closer coordination among committees affected, to some extent, the discretion of committee chairs in setting their agendas.

Criticism of such measures is legitimate and indeed essential. With that in mind, a severe crisis may require temporary adjustments to established working methods to ensure that parliament can perform its role as effectively as possible. The challenge is making the necessary adjustments without allowing them to become the permanent way in which parliament operates.

The Third Principle: A Return to Parliamentary Normalcy

One of the most important tests of parliamentary resilience is not only the ability to activate emergency mechanisms, but also the ability to know when to stop using them.

Measures introduced during a crisis can sometimes remain in place even after the original need for them has diminished. This may result from a sense of security, organizational convenience, or simply the gradual adaptation of institutions to new ways of working.

For this reason, it is important to establish a clear principle from the outset: any departure from normal parliamentary procedure should be temporary, proportionate, and limited in time.

At the Knesset, the adjustments introduced during the emergency period were reviewed on an ongoing basis, with the aim of returning to normal working practices as soon as circumstances allowed. Parliamentary tools and regular activities were gradually restored in line with the evolving security situation.

After approximately three months, the Knesset returned to full parliamentary operations, even though the war itself was still ongoing.

This demonstrates that parliamentary resilience is measured not only by a parliament's ability to continue functioning during a crisis, nor solely by its ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. It is also measured by the institutional discipline required to reinstate parliamentary rules and procedure, checks and balances, and normal working practices when conditions permit.

A strong parliament is not only one that knows how to activate emergency mechanisms. It is also one that knows how to return to normalcy at the right time.

Conclusion

Parliamentary resilience is not simply a matter of procedures, infrastructure, or emergency plans. It reflects the ability of the country's most important democratic institution to continue functioning amid instability, adapt its work to new needs without losing sights of its institutional role, and return to normal working practices when conditions allow.

The Israeli experience does not offer a single model that can be applied to every parliament. Constitutional structures, security environments, parliamentary cultures, and the challenges facing each country are different. Nevertheless, it seems that every parliament can, and should, ask itself three basic questions:

Can we continue to function if the reality around us changes overnight?
Are we prepared to adapt our parliamentary activity to the realities of a crisis?

And do we have the mechanisms in place to ensure a return to normal parliamentary functioning when conditions allow?

No parliament is immune to crisis. But every parliament can choose whether to wait for the next crisis to reveal its vulnerabilities, or to prepare for it in advance.

Mr Eric Janse, Canada, remarked they regularly do a trial to see how quickly they could setup a replacement chamber in an emergency. He said the Canadian Parliament burnt down in 1916 but clerks at the time had a replacement up and running the very next day, in a nearby museum. So, as it was possible in 1916, he said they must stand ready to make sure it possible now. He asked how did you make the ultimate decision to move building, and acknowledged it must have been a very tough decision? He further asked whether there consensuses and who made the decision, the Speaker?

Dr Silke Albin, Germany, remarked it was a very interesting presentation which had opened her eyes. She said that Germany is reviewing its crisis preparations. She enquired how much of these preparations had been done in advance and asked did you have any procedures in place which foresaw this crisis?

Ms Chloe Mawson, UK, remarked that since COVID the UK, and other parliaments, have thought much more about crisis management. For her first question, she asked whether there was a standing order in place to relocate the two Houses if needed. In the UK, usually, the House would need to meet in order to amend the standing orders and make that change. In an emergency, that would be very difficult as there would be no location in which to take the decision to move,. Consequently, the UK is considering creating a standing order in advance to permit this. Secondly, she asked how much money can be justified spending to provide for an alternative chamber? She said the UK has considered alternative chambers in Westminster, alternatives outside of London and digital platforms. Layering all three options, to provide for every eventuality, would be very expensive.

Mr Kyrre GRIMSTAD, Norway, remarked it is an important topic and said Norway is also strengthening its preparedness for crisis at present. His goal is also business continuity in all circumstances. He remarked that ensuring parliament can function in another location is very difficult but openness and transparency are central principles for all parliaments. In times of crisis, openness can be more difficult, particularly if the new location must be a secure place. He noted that the Rada in Ukraine is struggling with the balance between maintaining openness and security. He asked how this balance is being struck in Israel?

Mr Stanislas GODEFROY, France, noted that in the French Senate there is a new business continuity plan on which they took advice from an external consultancy

firm. The plan examines which services could be run in an emergency, at what level they would run, and which people were crucial to delivery. He said the central assumption in this modelling is that the parliamentary building is not available. He remarked that once an incident has occurred, it is much harder to react. He asked what was the most complicated thing to implement for the Knesset and what Mr Marzouk had learnt, to help prepare for future events?

Mr Dan Marzouk, **Israel**, replied to Canada that the decision to move from the chamber was taken by the Speaker of the House, he said this is the most senior person and therefore had the best authority to make the decision. In response to Germany, he said the Knesset was just starting to prepare when the emergency happened.

Recalling the words of the ASGP President earlier in the conference, he said democracy is expensive, but parliaments must be prepared. Reflecting on the UK's questions, he said it is very hard to decide how many layers of preparedness to implement in advance. He said in Israel, they have an alternative chamber in the Knesset and one outside the Knesset. These cater to two different scenarios, the solutions must be useful for realistic scenarios. On the media, transparency and access to democracy he said it is a very tough decision. The Knesset took this decision in real time, not in advance and the balance they struck was to let 1 person from each channel or media group enter the Knesset. So, they ended unlimited access to the parliamentary buildings. He said the media accepted this compromise quite well.

In response to Norway, he said in a crisis there are no easy choices and they have had to take many difficult decisions. For him, the central decision which changed everything was taken on 8 October to establish a coordination mechanism between committees in the Knesset. He said when there is instability or chaos in the country, the parliament has to be an island of stability. So, the coordination group brought committees together, prevented them all asking the same questions. He said Members did not like the decision, but it very much helped to manage the situation.

8. Presentation on proposed amendments to the ASGP Rules

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, recalled that in Istanbul, thanks to the generosity of the IPU and following the suggestion by former President Mr Philippe Schwab, the ASGP provided interpretation of its plenary meetings into four languages: French, English, Arabic and Spanish.

Due to the success of this trial, in Istanbul the Association agreed to increase membership fees by 25% from 2027 onwards to make the change permanent.

He proposed that the Association now update its rules to reflect the addition of Arabic and Spanish as working languages of the ASGP. He recalled that the drafts amendments had been shared with all members in the papers circulated on 25 September 2026.

In addition to amending the working languages, he drew members attention to two small technical changes to the ASGP rules. He said these changes simply update ASGP rules to reflect changes to the IPU Rules. They are not substantive.

He asked whether the Association agrees to the proposed changes to the ASGP rules?

The Association agreed.

9. 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 12:25

FIFTH SITTING

Friday 9 October 2026 (morning)

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, in the Chair

—

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 10.15AM

1. Introductory remarks

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, welcomed everyone back.

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 Gustave Léopold NGANE	Secretary General of the Senate, Cameroon
Mrs Bibi Safeena LOTUN	Secretary General of the Senate, Mauritius
Mr Santino Majak DENG	Secretary General of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, South Sudan

For associate membership:

Mr Seydou ISSAKA	Secretary General of the Inter-parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)
Mrs Lindiwe KHUMALO	Secretary General of the Pan-African Parliament

3. Update on the work of the Centre for Innovation in Parliament, Andy Richardson

Mr Andy Richardson presented the work of the Centre for Innovation in Parliament, the PowerPoint is available on the ASGP website here: IPU-slides-ASGP-e-f.pdf

Mr Juan Pablo GALLEGUILLOS, Chile, presented Chile's experience in the field of artificial intelligence, explaining that the project implemented aims to place technology at the service of citizens and to enhance the transparency of parliamentary work.

He specified that the project is based on three pillars: data governance, information security and technological sovereignty. The quality of institutional data is essential; Parliament wishes to retain control of the platform used and to limit its dependence on external providers.

He indicated that several artificial intelligence tools are already in use, particularly for the automatic transcription of debates in plenary sittings and committee meetings.

He also presented artificial intelligence-based legislative assistants, which make it possible to query current legislation, summarise legislative initiatives and provide practical information. Some of these services are accessible via WhatsApp. A chatbot has also been developed, drawing inspiration from the experience of the European Parliament.

He added that a protocol on the use of artificial intelligence has been developed for parliamentarians, civil servants and technical staff.

Finally, he emphasised that this experience had yielded several lessons. While artificial intelligence offers many opportunities, its use must continue to be accompanied by human oversight. He also stressed the essential importance of data quality and sound data governance.

4. GENERAL DEBATE with informal discussion groups: How is Parliament funded, and what are the processes for allocating and approving the budget?

Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Vice-President, Moderator, introduced the General Debate.

> • *Who is responsible for preparing the parliamentary budget?*
>
> • *To what extent do parliaments have autonomy over the approval of their own budgets, and how does this affect institutional independence?*

• *How does public perception shape funding decisions (for example, MPs' salaries or expensive investment in buildings)?*

****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. Mrs Jane Rose IKIROR (Uganda) and Ms Sarah Davies (UK) represented the English-speaking groups. Dr Firas JAAFAR (Iraq) represented the Arab-speaking group. Mr Yared NYANDWI (Burundi) represented the French speaking group. Mr Andrés SALAS represented the Spanish speaking group. Mr Evandro Aparecido BALDUTTI (Brazil) represented the Portuguese speaking group.**

Ms Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Vice-President, Moderator, concluded by saying that effective training helps MPs to perform their responsibilities with greater confidence and knowledge. For parliamentary staff, it helps them to give MPs the professional advice and support they require. Continuous learning helps institutions to remain professional and keep pace in a rapidly changing environment. She said she has collected some training tips, although she agrees it is better not to refer to this as 'training', as pointed out by colleagues this can be off-putting to MPs. She suggested perhaps 'orientation' is a better phrase and would encourage Members to take part. She concluded by saying continuous learning is key to continued improvement and that she hopes all delegates go back to their parliaments and encourage more training.

5. Concluding remarks

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

THE SITTING ENDED AT 12.10PM

SIXTH SITTING

Wednesday 9 October 2026 (afternoon)

Dr Jose Pedro Montero, President, in the Chair

THE SITTING WAS OPENED AT 4.15PM

1. ASGP-IPU joint session on 'How Parliaments Respond to Pressure'

Mr Andy Richardson, IPU, led a session which brought together Members of Parliament and Secretaries-General to discuss, from their own direct experience, how parliaments are navigating the pressures reshaping democratic institutions today. The session explored four pressure areas:

1. the political threats to parliamentary independence and democratic procedure;
2. the societal demands on parliaments to respond faster, more inclusively and more transparently;
3. the technological changes reshaping how parliaments work from the inside; and
4. the human costs of democratic service for MPs and staff.

2. Introductory remarks

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, resumed the proceedings of the ASGP. He said there was 1 final presentation and then he would update the Association on topics for the next meeting in Geneva and the budget.

THEME: IN THE NEWS AND INNOVATIONS AT PARLIAMENT

3. Communication: Ms Anabela Cabral Ferreira, Assembly of the Republic of Portugal on 'Building Parlimentary Cyber Resilience: An Annual Cybersecurity Programme for Parliaments'

The fast and unpredictable development of digital technologies, together with the growing sophistication of hybrid threats, presents parliaments around the world with challenges of a new order. As institutions that handle sensitive information, conduct their work in public and depend fundamentally on the trust of citizens, parliaments are targets of considerable value to those who seek to undermine

democratic processes. Any incident affecting a parliament has a significant impact not only on its functioning, but also on its reputation and on public confidence in democratic institutions. It is in this context that I would like to present a proposal which the Assembleia da República considers important for the future of our democratic institutions: an inter-parliamentary cooperation programme on cybersecurity, coordinated by the Assembleia da República.

The scale of the threat is well documented. In its report on the public administration sector, published in November 2025, ENISA, the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, identified central government as the most targeted segment in the European Union. It accounted for 69 per cent of recorded incidents, the majority of which were directed at the websites of parliaments, ministries and national authorities.

Among the principal threats, I would particularly mention espionage conducted by advanced persistent threat (APT) groups, which are frequently state-sponsored and seek to intercept communications and classified documents. This threat is by no means theoretical. In April 2024, the FBI provided the Belgian authorities with a forensic report revealing that malware had been present on the laptop of a Member of Parliament since mid-2021, allowing remote access to the device and the undetected extraction of data for almost three years. ENISA expects such campaigns to continue, particularly on the part of groups aligned with Russia and China.

Ransomware, which is capable of paralysing legislative activity, ranks among the four most common threats to public administration, alongside denial-of-service attacks, data breaches and social engineering. Influence operations and disinformation, now amplified by generative artificial intelligence, represent a further area of concern. More than 80 per cent of phishing campaigns worldwide already use AI-generated or AI-optimised content, and there is a growing trend towards the use of voice cloning, face swapping and language models to manipulate public opinion. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has also drawn attention to very concrete risks associated with the application of AI to the legislative process, such as the manipulation of draft legislation or the introduction of bias into the information provided to Members of Parliament.

Other significant threats include the compromise of the accounts of Members of Parliament and their advisers through social engineering and targeted phishing, which remains the main entry point for attackers in Europe and features in approximately 60 per cent of attacks. Electronic voting systems and citizen participation platforms are also exposed to attack, including coordinated hacktivism. Between July 2024 and June 2025, hacktivism accounted for around

80 per cent of the incidents recorded in the European Union, with peaks during electoral periods and at other politically significant moments.
The threat is not, however, confined to information systems. A survey of 519 parliamentarians from 85 countries, published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in February 2026, found that 71 per cent had been subjected to violence by members of the public, and that the majority of these cases, between 65 and 77 per cent, occurred in the digital environment. In my view, the conclusion is clear: protecting parliaments requires a response that brings together cybersecurity, information integrity and the personal safety of their members.

The Assembleia da República is well placed to lead such an initiative. It combines the legitimacy of a parliament with a historic role in European democracy, the technical capacity of its cybersecurity team, and a network of inter-parliamentary relations built up over many years by its services, committees and political parties. Coordinating this programme will also strengthen Portugal's presence and influence within the European and international cybersecurity ecosystem. The timing is, moreover, opportune: organisations such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy have emphasised that parliaments, while high-value targets, remain comparatively underfunded in terms of cybersecurity. It is precisely this gap that the programme seeks to help close through cooperation among legislative institutions.

The programme has six strategic objectives. The first is to strengthen the cybersecurity of participating parliaments through an annual cycle of training, practical exercises and threat-information sharing, supporting each institution in complying with the national transposition of the NIS 2 Directive. The second is to establish an inter-parliamentary network capable of responding in a coordinated manner to cross-border incidents since, as threats do not respect borders, neither can our response. The third is to raise awareness among political decision-makers, so that parliamentary cybersecurity is regarded as a matter of governance rather than merely a technical issue.

The fourth is to produce shared reference documentation, including reports, good-practice guides and incident response plans, of use to parliaments at different levels of digital maturity. The fifth is to prepare parliaments for emerging technologies, in particular post-quantum cryptography and the secure use of artificial intelligence, in line with the 2024 European Recommendation and the European transition roadmap, which sets 2030 as the deadline for critical infrastructure and 2035 for all other systems. The sixth is to position the Assembleia da República as a centre of excellence in parliamentary cybersecurity, consolidating Portugal's role as a bridge between different spheres of cooperation.

The programme rests on three principles: technical depth combined with strategic relevance, inspired by ENISA's Cyber Europe exercises and by major technical conferences, but adapted to the realities of parliaments; accessibility for non-specialists, through TEDx-style sessions designed for political decision-makers and the leadership of our institutions; and constant topicality, through webinars on emerging issues such as quantum computing, digital sovereignty, operational resilience and the threat landscape facing parliaments.

The programme is organised into four quarterly modules, each devoted to a different dimension of parliamentary cybersecurity and combining several session formats in order to balance technical depth with political accessibility. These include eighteen-minute TED talks offering a thought-provoking perspective to a broad audience, including political leadership; forty-five-minute keynote addresses providing technical depth and the analysis of real cases, preferably European ones, in the style of the DEF CON and Black Hat conferences; thematic webinars of sixty to seventy minutes, held in a hybrid format with live questions; half-day practical workshops with simulation exercises bringing together technical and political teams; and red team briefings with restricted access, classified as TLP:RED, providing threat intelligence to decision-makers. Each cycle will close with an annual in-person, full-day assembly to take stock of the year's work, strengthen the network and jointly set the agenda for the following cycle.
Each module will conclude with a concrete outcome, as we wish training and knowledge-sharing to translate into instruments that parliaments can genuinely use.

The first quarter will produce a threat report shared among parliaments, accompanied by a good-practice guide on secure parliamentary communication in the face of the risks posed by generative AI. The second will deliver a post-quantum readiness guide, including a cryptographic inventory template, a phased migration plan aligned with the 2030 and 2035 targets, and crypto-agility contractual clauses for suppliers. The third will produce an incident response plan tailored to the specific circumstances of parliaments, and the fourth a public annual report together with the approved agenda for the following cycle, closing the year with accountability and planning. All these documents will follow the six functions of the Portuguese National Cybersecurity Reference Framework (QNRCS), namely govern, identify, protect, detect, respond and recover, so that they may serve as evidence of compliance for entities covered by the Legal Framework for Cybersecurity. The annual report will also include a comparison of the cybersecurity legal regimes applicable to each participating parliament.

Coordination of the programme will rest with the Assembleia da República, through its COSI team, within a three-tier structure. At the political level, a Programme Committee comprising representatives of each parliament will set the annual agenda, approve deliverables and validate the strategy. At the technical

level, a Technical Working Group composed of the parliaments' cybersecurity teams will produce content, coordinate sessions and ensure liaison with CERT.PT and other bodies. At the operational level, a Permanent Secretariat based at the Assembleia da República will ensure continuity between cycles, the logistics of events and communication with parliaments and the public. The National Cybersecurity Centre will also be invited to join the Programme Committee as a permanent observer, ensuring alignment with the QNRCS, liaison with CERT.PT and the use of training materials already made available by the national authority.

As the programme involves the sharing of sensitive information among parliaments of different sovereign States, particular attention will be paid to confidentiality. In the first quarter, the Permanent Secretariat will propose an information classification and sharing protocol inspired by the Traffic Light Protocol, which is widely used by CERT.PT and the cybersecurity community, together with a memorandum of understanding, to be signed by each parliament, setting out clear rules on the confidentiality, retention and use of information. As regards resources, the allocation for the launch phase is still under assessment and will depend on the parliaments that decide to join the project. It is, therefore, a programme to be built jointly, with the participation of each partner.

The success of the programme will be measured against quantitative and qualitative indicators, reviewed annually by the Programme Committee. We aim for at least eight participating parliaments in the first year and fifteen by the third, a session attendance rate above 80 per cent, four reference documents per cycle (one per module), participant satisfaction above four out of five, the presence of both technical experts and political decision-makers in every module, and at least two simulation exercises each year. With regard to post-quantum readiness, the objective is for the Assembleia da República, and those partners who wish to join in, to complete their cryptographic inventory by the end of the first cycle. In terms of maturity and compliance, we seek annual progress against the QNRCS and recorded training for all senior officials. All indicators will be published in the annual report in order to ensure transparency and to allow subsequent cycles to be adjusted on the basis of evidence.

Parliaments are essential to a democratic society and the rule of law, and as parliamentary administrations we share the responsibility of ensuring that Members can exercise their mandates efficiently and safely. In an era of hybrid threats, cognitive warfare and a growing tide of disinformation, the threats to our democracies no longer recognise borders, and I am convinced that our response should not recognise them either. This programme is an invitation to cooperation, and the Assembleia da República looks forward to building it together with the parliaments represented here.

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, remarked it was a very interesting and timely presentation. He noted there are lots of reports about interference in elections in different countries and we must all take precautions.

Mr Dan Marzouk, Israel, remarked it is a very important presentation on a critical topic. He said Knesset is one of the most attached parliaments, Knesset has developed significant experience. Own cyber security centre at Knesset, will give positive consideration to this initiate. Would be very happ to share and contribute to this initiative.

Ms Anabela Cabral Ferreira, Portugal, responded to thank Mr Marzouk for his interest in working with Portugal on this project, she said that although cyber protection is a matter of national sovereignty, we can respect the strict confidentiality that each country will want to preserve, while still working together. Cyber-attacks are a cross cutting threat happening everywhere and they intensity in electoral moments and international cooperation is therefore very important. Portugal stands ready to work with other countries on this project.

4. Orders of the day for the spring session 2027

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, informed the Association that the Executive Committee has selected 3 themes and 3 General Debate topics from amongst the suggestions submitted by the Association:

Themes

1) **Presentation of concrete examples of the use of artificial intelligence within Parliaments** [*Communications on this topic are limited to 7-minutes and should be a practical explanation of how you are using AI in your parliament now*.]

2) **Managing written questions and motions in parliament**

3) **In the news and innovations at parliament**

It is always possible to present a communication that does not fall within the proposed themes, subject to its acceptance by the Executive Committee.

General debates

(1) General Debate with small group discussion: How can parliamentary administrations strengthen public trust in an era of misinformation and rapidly changing media?

- What role should parliamentary administrations play in providing the public with timely, accurate and accessible information?
- How should parliaments respond to misinformation and disinformation concerning parliamentary work and decisions?
- How can parliaments work effectively with traditional media, social networks and digital platforms while preserving their institutional neutrality?
- How can parliamentary communication distinguish institutional information from political communication?

(2) General Debate with small group discussion: Expectations and motivations of younger generations joining parliamentary administrations

- What are the main motivations of younger generations who choose to join parliamentary administrations? What are their expectations regarding working conditions, remuneration and career prospects?
- Do parliamentary administrations encounter particular difficulties in attracting and recruiting young staff members? What initiatives have been put in place to make them more attractive?
- How are parliamentary administrations adapting to the expectations of younger generations, particularly with regard to work-life balance, flexibility and the use of new technologies?
- What training, support and professional development arrangements are implemented to promote the integration and retention of young staff members?
- How do parliamentary administrations promote cooperation between generations and the transfer of knowledge and skills, while encouraging the new ideas and innovations brought by young staff members?
- How do we help younger colleague understand the importance of political impartiality and what it means?

(3) Open general debate: Codes of conduct applicable to parliamentarians

- Is there, within your Parliament, a code of conduct or a set of ethical rules applicable to parliamentarians? What are the main obligations and how were they developed?
- Which bodies are responsible for ensuring compliance with these rules? What role does the parliamentary administration play in implementation and monitoring?

- What arrangements are provided for preventing conflicts of interest and ensuring the transparency of parliamentarians' activities, particularly with regard to declarations of interests, gifts and benefits received?
- What procedures are implemented in the event of a breach of the rules? What sanctions may be imposed and by which authorities?
- What training is offered to parliamentarians to promote compliance with the rules? What difficulties are encountered in their application?

The Association approved the draft agenda.

5. Elections

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, announced that the Executive Committee proposed to open 2 posts as ordinary member of the Executive Committee to election at the next session in Spring 2027.

He announced that the Autumn 2027 would be his last session as President of the Association, and also the last session for his colleague Dr Georg Kleemann, so an election for Vice-President would also be held.

6. Budget

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, informed the Association it must formally adopt the budget of the Association. He said the income and costs of the Association in 2026 will be the same as in 2025. The accounts for 2024 are now closed and he confirmed the Association did not go over budget. He said the Association has a stable income from membership fees and stable costs.

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

The budget is approved.

7. Concluding Remark

Dr José Pedro MONTERO, President, thanked colleagues for an excellent discussion and said he looked forward to working with them again in Geneva in May. He concluded by thanking the interpreters for making everything possible.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 17:20