How to Assemble Parliamentary Assemblies

Bringing International Parliamentary Institutions to the Next Level

cuncr.org

Outcome Document

with Parliamentary Assembly Speakers from:

Inter-Parliamentary Union
OECD
PARLAMIENTO LATINOAMERICANO Y CARIBEÑO
European Parliament
AIPA
CUNCf’s inaugural event on “How to Assemble Parliamentary Assemblies” was an opportunity for politicians, practitioners, academics, and NGOs to have frank discussions about the challenges facing this unique form of supranational democracy, and how to develop them further. With representatives from various interparliamentary assemblies across the globe and academic experts in this field, participants explored the historical evolution of inter-parliamentary institutions (IPI), their current roles around the world, and their prospects for the future.

**Seminar Objective-Opening Remarks, by S.M. Sharei, Director, Center for UN Constitutional Research**

We have a simple objective: promoting international regional democracies and cooperation, towards furthering global democracy.

While the objective is simple, how to get there is complex. How to strengthen our institutions, how to learn from each other’s best practices, how to collaborate, how to develop common stands on global challenges; and most importantly, how to give the people more regional and global voice through representation.

Notre but est simple : promouvoir les démocraties et coopérations internationales régionales, en vue d’une démocratie universelle. Si le but en soi paraît simple, la manière d’y arriver est complexe. Comment renforcer nos institutions, comment tirer des leçons ensemble de nos expériences communes, comment collaborer, comment développer des positions communes par rapport aux défis mondiaux, et, surtout, comment donner une voix au people par une représentation adéquate?

我们有一个简单的目标：促进国际区域民主与合作，以此促进全球民主。 虽然目标很简单，但如何实现目标却很复杂。 如何加强我们的机构，如何相互学习最佳实践，如何合作，如何在全球挑战中建立共同立场；最重要的是，如何通过代表制度使人们在区域和全球发出更大的声音。

En tanto que el objetivo es simple, cómo llegar a él es complejo. Cómo fortalecer nuestras instituciones, cómo aprender unos de otros nuestras mejores prácticas, cómo colaborar y cómo desarrollar plataformas comunes sobre los retos globales ; y lo más importante, cómo dar a la gente más voz regional y global a través de representación.

目的はシンプルではありますが、そこに至る道筋は複雑です。制度をいかに強化するか、互いの成功例から学び合うか、とりわけ代表制を通じて、いかにして人々の声を地域レベルで、そしてグローバルなレベルで届くようにすることができるかなど、いかにして地球的課題に関して共通の立場を発展させ、協調させることができるかなど多くの課題があります。

في حين أن الهدف بسيط ، إلا إن كيفية الوصول له معقدة . كيفية تعزيز مؤسساتنا وكيفية التعلم من أفضل الممارسات لدى بعضنا البعض وكيفية التعاون وكيفية تطوير المواقف المشتركة حول التحديات العالمية والأهم من ذلك كيفية إعطاء الناس صوئًا محليًا وعالميًا أكثر من خلال التمثيل

Хотя цель простая, достичь ее сложно. Как укрепить наши институты, как перенимать наилучшие практики друг друга, как сотрудничать, как разрабатывать совместные позиции по глобальным вызовам, самое главное, как укрепить голос народов на региональном и глобальном уровнях посредством представленности.
Speaker Summaries (chronological)

Isra Sunthornvut – Secretary-General, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly

Seeing that all politics is local, and all Parliamentarians deal with issues that are relevant to their local constituents, Parliamentary Assemblies must become issue-based institutions that focus on issues that relate to the people. There is already a gap between the National Parliaments and the constituents in itself, when a Parliamentary Assembly is regional, there becomes more of a gap on top of the existing gap. That is why we in AIPA are transforming to become an issue-based organization in order to become more relevant to the peoples of ASEAN.

Andrea Cofelice - PhD, Centre for Studies on Federalism, Italy

Evolution of International Parliamentary Institutions and their Categorization: There are between 40 and 100 IPIs. The influence of several of them are continually growing, and overall IPIs are useful for creating a direct channel between constituents and international organizations.

Andrew Bradley - Director, Office of International IDEA to the European Union

The Role and Importance of Parliamentary Assemblies for Democracy: For the first time, the spread of democracy has stopped or even reversed. As a result, now more than ever we need to strengthen democratic institutions, and if not for parliaments, who will promote democracy?

Sergio Piazzi - Secretary-General, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

The Role of International Parliaments in Addressing Global and Regional Challenges: Parliamentary Assemblies are uniquely positioned to provide assistance in important areas such as terrorism or migration. They can also partner with other organizations (UN, NATO, WTO, etc.) to provide regional insight and advocate on behalf of constituents.

Haidara Aichata Cissé - Vice-President, Pan-African Parliament, African Union

The Pan-African Parliament is working to become a more significant body of the African Union, including by getting greater legislative rather than advisory powers. According to the Malabo Protocol adopted by the African Union, PAP would be able to propose draft model laws. PAP is important in providing local context and support for UN missions, and to ensure that African Union decisions are implemented at the national level. One key role is striving to address migration and human trafficking, both external and internal.

Fernando Iglesias - Chamber of Deputies, Argentina, Mercosur

There is a great deal of corruption and apathy in IPIs, and poor division of responsibilities between organizations. Need a common goal – in Latin America, this could be high homicide rates and transnational crime, in particular right now through the advocacy and political campaign for COPLA (Latin American Court for Transnational Crime).

Madeleine Hosli and Reinhilde Bouckaert – Director and Researcher respectively, United Nations University - CRIS
A case study of parliamentary diplomacy is the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA UfM) has been presented by Mrs. Reinhilde Bouckaert (project researcher at UNU-CRIS). The deliberations on climate change were analysed for the Assembly as this is a subject that is high on the global agenda, certainly since the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2015 Paris Agreement. This mechanism allows actors to be less strategic in their behaviour, as compared to the national setting, voting is not an issue but the framework is used to allow for more openness towards new information and updating of views and opinions. The climate change debates in the PA UfM closely followed the energy and climate discussions in the EP and these discussions have taken an increasingly prominent place in the institution. But participation in, for example, the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water was largely from the European side. Hence, while the EU has already rather democratic principles in place, notably with the increasingly enhanced powers of the EP, patterns of parliamentary diplomacy can strengthen deliberation with crucial partners the EU deals with, enhancing mutual learning, information exchange and deliberation.

**Anda Filip - Director, Member Parliaments and External Relations at the IPU**

*The Inter-Parliamentary Union: Efforts to bridge the democracy gap in international relations and provide a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations*

The UN-IPU partnership seeks to mobilize parliaments and parliamentarians around the global issues of our time, inform UN decisions from a parliamentary perspective, and help translate international commitments into national realities (through legislation, policies and budgeting). This interaction is conducted in observance of the independence of parliaments and of the separation of powers between the executive and the legislative. As part of this process, the IPU and its member Parliaments also exercise a certain degree of oversight of UN decision-making and operations.

**Niels Blokker - Professor, Leiden University**

This presentation was related to research undertaken in the preparation of a new edition of the book ‘International Institutional Law’ (co-authored with Henry G. Schermers). One of the new developments in recent years is the rise and development of international parliamentary organs, within and outside the framework of international organizations. Dr. Blokker briefly analyzed this and discussed whether this is a fig leaf for a fundamental democratic problem, or a helpful fundamental new development in the context of respect for the vox populi in our era of both globalization and nationalism.

**Andreas Bummel - Executive Director, DWB**

Andreas Bummel, Executive Director of Democracy Without Borders and Secretary-General of the Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), presented a UNPA as an additional and complementary way to “bring the voice of the people” into the UN. Similar to the early stages in the development of the European Parliament he said that a UNPA should become “a common assembly of all entities in the UN system and beyond.”
Silvia Terrón - Coordinator, OECD Global Parliamentary Network

The OECD Parliamentary Network is open to all MPs of OECD countries, and acts as a network and information-sharing hub between legislative bodies. It takes a thematic approach, with parliamentary groups that focus on tax issues, and integrity and transparency.

Maria Ivone Soares - MP Mozambique, PAP
(unable to make the virtual presentation but sent a statement, which is summarized here:)

It is our aim, in the long term, to establish a world parliament, one that is able to pass binding law and whose members are directly elected. However, at a shorter term, it is more practical to establish this presently proposed Parliamentary Assembly, a consultative subsidiary body that complements the work of the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly.

World peace and sustainable development requires a World Parliamentary Assembly to ensure representation, passing of binding laws and oversight, the elements of democracy.

It is true that assemblies at any level imply loss of some measure of sovereignty. But on the other hand, the complete lack of international laws and enforcing bodies allow for exceeding anarchy or even chaos in international relations.

Many more questions and solutions will come up as we go along the way. Our goals, of establishing a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly and Security Council reform, are the necessary steps in fulfilling the San Francisco Promise of the United Nations Charter reform. Achieving these goals will help to lead the world population to peace and sustainable development, a better world for us all and for the next generations to come.

European Partnership for Democracy
(Although due to scheduling constraints a speaker from EPD was not able to present, their expertise and commitment to promoting democratic institutions such as IPIs were invaluable to this seminar. Their mission statement follows:)

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is a non-profit organisation supporting democracy worldwide. It comprises fourteen European civil and political society organisations from eleven EU Member States present in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

Located at the heart of the EU district in Brussels, EPD has established itself as a key player on EU democracy support, both vis-à-vis the EU Institutions and the member states, as well as the wider democracy support community (experts, CSOs, donors). Through innovative and collaborative methodologies based on the development of effective partnerships, EPD facilitates the exchange of knowledge and good practices around the world while advocating for a stronger presence of democracy support on the European Union’s agenda.

Jo Leinen, MEP, European Parliament

In his remarks at the reception Mr. Leinen kindly hosted at the European Parliament, he reiterated the importance of parliamentary assemblies, the potential for their growth to European Union-style supra-states, and the need for a world parliamentary assembly, as laid out in his recent book co-written with Andreas Bummel, A World Parliament: Governance and Democracy in the 21st Century.
**Seminar Workshop**

In addition to the lectures and panels, the attendees also took part in an interactive workshop that facilitated the difficulties in balancing institutional interests against national agendas, high turnover rates of members, funding and logistical issues, and difficulties connecting with the people that parliamentarians represent. At the workshop, the CUNCR proposal to categorize IPI discussions into the following three topics: 1- Challenges, 2- Goals, and 3- Common Stances was adopted.

**I. Challenges:**

1. Lack of stable membership
2. Visibility
3. Logistical issues
4. Insufficient powers
5. Indifference of MPs and governments
6. Limited resources for growing an ambitious agenda
7. Commitment of member states
8. Follow-up to advance agendas
9. Lack of impact
10. Proliferation of organizations leading to fragmentation
11. Lack of coordination and cooperation
12. Domestic problems (corruption, incoherence, viewing participation as a cost rather than a benefit)
13. Disconnect between participation in IPIs and being re-elected nationally
14. Lack of real political will
15. Lack of openness and transparency (voting, debates, budgets, etc.)
16. Power asymmetry between members
17. Prioritizing national interests
18. Media landscape – focus on national issues
19. Need to consider intra-national regions for policy implementation
20. Lack of coordination within national parliaments
21. No secretariat to follow up
22. Lack of resources independent to national interests

From there, the participants also discussed their organizations’ goals in the next five to ten years to address these challenges:

**II. Goals (intermediate term)**

1. Strengthen capacity for national secretariats, including capacity-building for staff
2. Better communication (sharing best practices)
3. Progress towards universal membership
4. Stronger parliaments, more success in playing a role in their own societies
5. Min. 30% women in parliaments
6. Engagement with young parliamentarians
7. Decrease in human rights violations against parliamentarians
8. Successful speakers’ conference contributing to greater parliamentary voice globally
9. Funding for communication, including transnational media
10. Creating demand and support for the added value that IPIs can bring
11. Issue-led policies
12. Inclusion of opposition parties
13. Make IPIs fit for purpose
14. Make use of ICTs – digitally enabled parliaments
15. Constitutional legitimacy (treaty-based)
16. Supranational judiciary

III. Common Stances

Prior to the workshop and at the sidelines of the seminar, CUNCR had recommended IPI discussions on global challenges, such as climate change and the environment, UN Charter review and UNPA, international criminal and transnational crimes, nuclear weapons free zones, disaster and emergency preparedness, as well as conflict migration. Although the category was adopted, due to lack of time, the common stances some or all of the parliamentary assemblies could take on these international issues was deferred.

Notes on the Workshop

- The topic items are not based on priority
- The topic items are not short listed

The workshop proved to be one of the most beneficial part of the 2-day seminar where the IPIs could discuss interactively the challenges and goal they share, learn from their best practices, as well as take common stances in order to improve the efficacy of their institutions, thereby cooperating in formulating their domestic and regional policies towards serving their constituents and global citizens better. However, it is clear from this, and the rest of the interventions throughout the seminar, that there is a great deal more discussion to be had on the topic of parliamentary assemblies, their role, responsibilities and potential. We are therefore looking forward to organizing future iterations of this seminar in the coming years.
With NGO Supporters:

DEMOCRACY WITHOUT BORDERS

Main Partner and Co-Organizer

EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR DEMOCRACY

Union of European Federalists
Union Europäischer Föderalisten
Union des Fédéralistes Européens