



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

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Statement by Anders B. Johnsson Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Union

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Let me start, Mr. President, by congratulating you upon your election to lead this Council. I look forward to working with you and members of this Council with a view to bringing a parliamentary dimension to this new United Nations body.

Mr. President,

Perhaps I should begin by explaining why I am speaking today on behalf of the organisation that brings together the parliaments of the world. To those of you who, like me, see it as only natural that parliaments have a role in the international body that seeks to promote and supervise the enjoyment of human rights, I apologise in advance.

There is every reason why parliaments and the IPU are natural partners for the Human Rights Council. Parliament ratifies human rights treaties and converts their provisions into domestic law. Recommendations issued by the treaty bodies or under your special procedures often require parliamentary debate and action. Parliament and its members monitor respect for human rights and curb abuses. Parliament adopts the national budget and can steer funds towards areas that are crucial to the enjoyment of human rights. Members of parliament are opinion leaders who can do much to raise public awareness and ensure that society is imbued with the values underpinning democracy and human rights.

The IPU has worked closely with parliaments on human rights issues for many years. We convene annual meetings of parliamentary human rights committees to examine specific human rights issues. We run a capacity building programme for parliaments in the field of human rights and, in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, have recently produced a handbook for parliamentarians on the international human rights machinery and international human rights conventions and treaty bodies. The IPU works on truth, reconciliation and justice issues in the aftermath of conflict. Last but not least, the IPU has a well-established mechanism for addressing human rights violations affecting individual parliamentarians.

Mr. President,

In September of last year, the IPU convened a Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament at United Nations Headquarters in New York to discuss parliaments' role in international affairs. More than 150 Speakers and Presidents of Parliament pledged their support for United Nations reform along the lines proposed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "In larger freedom". They also voiced a number of proposals whereby parliaments, working at the international level through the IPU, could provide support to the United Nations.

The heads of State and government meeting a few days afterwards endorsed the notion that the United Nations and national parliaments should strengthen their cooperation, including through the IPU, in a number of areas. One of these was United Nations reform. I therefore believe that we share a mandate to examine how parliaments can provide assistance to the Human Rights Council. Specifically, the IPU