



Parliament of Australia

Parliamentary Delegation

to

132nd Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

Hanoi, Vietnam

28 March – 1 April 2015

Commonwealth of Australia 2015

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Members of the Delegation

Leader of the Delegation

The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Federal Member for Mackellar
Liberal Party of Australia

Deputy Leader of the Delegation

Senator Glenn Sterle
Senator for Western Australia
Australian Labor Party

Ms Nola Marino MP
Member for Forrest, Western Australia
Liberal Party of Australia

Senator Cory Bernardi
Senator for South Australia
Liberal Party of Australia

Senator Sue Lines
Senator for Western Australia
Australian Labor Party

Officials:

Mr Damien Jones
Chief of Staff to the Speaker of the House of Representatives

Mr Brien Hallett
Delegation Secretary

Mr Peter Manvell
Liaison Officer, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

132nd IPU Assembly – Hanoi

The 132nd Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly took place in Hanoi from 28 March to 1 April 2015 and was attended by 678 parliamentarians from 128 member countries including 91 presiding or deputy presiding officers. A number of observers also attended.

The Australian delegation to the Assembly was led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP, and included Senator Glenn Sterle (Deputy Delegation Leader), Senator Cory Bernardi, Ms Nola Marino MP, and Senator Sue Lines.

Background

The IPU is the international organisation of parliaments of sovereign states and provides a focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue. The IPU works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To achieve these aims the IPU:

- fosters contacts, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians for all countries;
- considers questions of international interest and concern;
- contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights; and
- contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

There are currently 166 national parliaments who are members of the IPU and ten regional parliamentary assemblies which are associate members.¹ Most members are affiliated with

one of six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU .

While the major focus for the Australian delegation is participation in the twice-yearly assemblies, the IPU is constantly active in promoting democracy throughout the world. Its main areas of activity are:

- representative democracy;
- international peace and security;
- sustainable development;
- human rights and humanitarian law;
- women in politics; and
- education, science and culture.

The Australian Parliament plays an active role in supporting a number of these activities in partnership with the IPU, particularly in the local region.

The IPU Assembly is the principal statutory body of the IPU. It meets bi-annually to bring together parliamentarians to study international problems and make recommendations for action. The assemblies include debates on significant international issues, the regular meeting of the IPU Governing Council, and meetings of specialist committees, working groups and geopolitical groups.



The Australian Delegation at the National Convention Centre in Hanoi

¹ A list of current members of the IPU is available on the IPU website:

<http://www.ipu.org/english/membshp.htm>

Assembly

The 132nd Assembly was formally opened on Saturday 28 March 2015. The Assembly agenda addressed the following items:

- General Debate – *The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning words into action*
- Consideration of items for debate as an Emergency Item and the debate;
- Resolution: *Cyber warfare: A serious threat to peace and global security*
- Resolution: *Shaping a new system of water governance: Promoting parliamentary action on water and sanitation*
- Resolution: *International law as it relates to national sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and human rights*
- Reports of the four standing committees; and
- the 196th session of the IPU Governing Council.

Meetings of geopolitical groups

The IPU has six geopolitical groups that meet immediately prior to, and during, each Assembly to consider matters on the IPU Agenda and, where possible, agree a group position. Candidatures for positions on IPU committees are also considered and submitted through the geopolitical groups.

Most member countries are members of at least one geopolitical group. Australia is a member of two geopolitical groups: the Asia-Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group and participated in meetings of both groups at the 132nd IPU Assembly.²

² The IPU Statutes stipulate that Members that belong to more than one geopolitical group should indicate which geopolitical Group they represent for the purposes of submitting candidatures for positions within the IPU. Prior to the commencement of the 132nd Assembly, Australia advised the IPU Secretariat that it would exercise its voting rights through the Asia Pacific Group.

Asia-Pacific Group (APG)³

The APG met once during the Assembly and received a report from the ASEAN +3 Group as well as a briefing by IPU executive committee members. The meeting considered nominations for a number of vacancies to be filled during the 132nd Assembly including several Standing Committees, the Executive Committee, and the Co-ordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians. The Group also considered the various topics proposed for debate as an emergency item by the Assembly.

Twelve Plus Group⁴

The Twelve Plus Group met four times during the Assembly. The meeting received a report of the executive committee, a financial report and considered a wide range of nominations for a number of vacancies to be filled during the 132nd Assembly. Reports were presented in relation to the work of various committees and the meeting of Women Parliamentarians.

During the meetings, members raised the issue of the current situation in the Ukraine and developed a *Declaration on the Ukraine*.

A key aspect of the deliberations of the Twelve Plus Group concerned the proposal for an emergency item which is covered in more detail below. The co-operation of the Australian and Belgian delegations after consideration of this item by the Twelve Plus group led to the joint proposal being submitted for consideration by the Assembly.

IPU – debates in the Assembly and other activities

A key focus of Assembly business are two major debates in the plenary: (i) the general debate, and (ii) the debate on an emergency item.

³ The membership of the Asia-Pacific Group is available on the IPU website: <http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/geopol.htm>

⁴ The membership of the Twelve Plus Group is available on the IPU website: <http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/geopol.htm>

The General Debate

The topic of the general debate was *The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action*. Opening keynote contributions were provided by the Vice President of the National Assembly of Vietnam, Ms Tong Thi Phong, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Post-2015 Development Planning, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, and IPU President, Mr. Saber Chowdhury.

Following a ballot to determine the order of contributions by members, the Speaker opened the debate. In her contribution, Mrs Bishop addressed the IPU's general debate on the topic of *The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action*. The Speaker spoke of Australia's commitment to designing a post-2015 development agenda that will focus global efforts on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, economic growth including trade, the private sector and jobs, and inclusive and effective institutions and peaceful societies. Australia is actively participating in the UN-led process to negotiate this new agenda.

Emergency Item

The IPU Rules provide that any member country may propose a topic for inclusion as an emergency item to be debated. The matter must:

...relate to a major event of international concern on which it appears necessary for the IPU to express its opinion. Such a request must receive a two thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted [for debate]." (Assembly Rule 11-2(a))

Before departure, the Australian delegation resolved to put forward an item for consideration as the topic of this debate. Following consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the delegation proposed the following topic on 5 March:

The role of parliaments in: (i) combatting the threat of terrorism conducted by

organizations such as Boko Haram against innocent civilians, in particular women and girls; and (ii) ensuring democratic procedures continue.

This was one of nine proposals put forward by member parliaments before the deadline, and the full list in order of receipt is set out below:

Ensuring enhanced protection for the cultural heritage of humanity threatened with destruction or pillage by terrorist groups in the Middle East and North Africa: The role of the IPU and national parliaments	Morocco	4 March 2015
The role of parliaments in: (i) combatting the threat of terrorism conducted by organizations such as Boko Haram against innocent civilians, in particular women and girls; and (ii) ensuring democratic procedures continue	Australia	5 March 2015
The role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in countering the growing threat of terrorism	Islamic Republic of Iran	16 March 2015
Respect for religions and religious symbols, and for freedom of opinion and expression	Jordan	16 March 2015
Addressing the criminal activity of Boko Haram: The role of parliamentarians	Chad	17 March 2015
The role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in addressing the terrorism and extremism of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups	Syrian Arab Republic	19 March 2015
Cooperation between parliaments in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram	Belgium	24 March 2015
The role of the IPU in the face of attempts to violate the sovereignty and right to self-determination of Venezuela	Venezuela	26 March 2015
The role of parliaments in combating the negative effects of climate change	Kenya	27 March 2015

As proposals were progressively published on the IPU website, the Australian delegation attempted to see if, where appropriate, a solution could be negotiated to combine the Australian resolution with another related item to ensure some chance of success in the ballot to determine which matter would be adopted for debate. After arrival in Hanoi, and following initial consideration of this matter by the Twelve Plus Group, the Australian delegation members were able to work with their Belgian counterparts on a combined proposal as follows:

The role of parliaments in combating all terrorist acts perpetrated by organizations such as Daesh and Boko Haram against innocent civilians, in particular women and girls.

Following a ballot, this proposal achieved the required two-thirds majority and the highest number of votes, and was listed on the agenda, debated and unanimously adopted. The work of Senator Bernardi on the drafting committee which developed the full resolution and Mr Manvell in ensuring that the wording of the motion and detailed resolution was in accord with Australian foreign policy contributed to the successful outcome.

In an acknowledgement of Australia's participation, Mrs Bishop was also asked to chair the Assembly on the morning of the emergency debate.



The Speaker and Leader of the Belgian Delegation, Mr Pol Van Den Driessche, presenting the combined Australian/Belgian proposal for the emergency debate to the Assembly

Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

The 21st Meeting of Women Parliamentarians was held during the Assembly and Senator Lines and Ms Marino were part of a total of 93 parliamentarians from 67 countries and representatives of international organisations who took part in proceedings.

During its two sessions, the meeting considered reports from the Co-ordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, the Gender Partnership Group and a briefing on recent IPU activities in the area of gender equality. Participants examined (from the perspective of gender equality) two proposed resolutions on the agendas of the Standing Committees on Peace and International Security (Cyber Warfare) and Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade (Water Governance).

The Speaker, Ms Marino and Senator Lines also attended a function to mark the 30th anniversary of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians.



Ms Marino and Senator Lines at the meeting of Women Parliamentarians

Standing Committees

The IPU has four standing committees that met during the Assembly to consider the following matters:

- *Cyber warfare: A serious threat to peace and global security (first Standing Committee on International Peace and Security);*

- *Shaping a new system of water governance: Promoting parliamentary action on water* (second Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade);
- *International law as it relates to national sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and human rights*; and Interactive debate on the topic *The Convention on the Rights of the Child 25 years on: Are children's lives better?* (third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights); and
- (i) Interactive debate to mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations; (ii) review of IPU Field Missions; and (iii) Assessment of Parliaments' capacities to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals (fourth Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs).

Standing Committee on International Peace and Security

Senator Sterle attended the two sessions of the First Standing Committee and contributed to the deliberations on the draft resolution concerning *Cyber warfare: A serious threat to peace and global security*. This resolution was later considered by the Assembly and adopted by consensus on 1 April 2015.

Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Ms Marino participated in the deliberations of the Second Standing Committee which met twice during the Assembly and also held a Bureau meeting (of which Ms Marino is a member). A key focus of this Standing Committee's work at this Assembly was the finalising of work commenced at the previous Assembly on *Shaping a new system of water governance: Promoting parliamentary action on water*. This resolution was considered and adopted by consensus on the last day of the Assembly.

This work was complemented by an interactive debate on *Follow-up on the IPU*

water governance resolution: Taking it forward.

During these sessions, Ms Marino was asked to act as Chair of one session of committee proceedings and was appointed rapporteur when the resolution was presented to the Assembly.

Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

The fourth Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs held two meetings during the Assembly, and a major item of business was an interactive debate to mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. The Speaker was invited to be one of the panellists in this debate and in her remarks Mrs Bishop highlighted Australia's long association with the UN that goes back to its inception in 1945, including the fact that 46,000 Australians have supported nearly 70 UN peace-keeping missions. Mrs Bishop acknowledged the success of the UN as a vehicle to address trans-national issues such as counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, climate change and migration. The Speaker also noted some of the challenges which the UN faces and acknowledged the work of the Secretary General and his senior staff to modernise and streamline the various components of the UN and how they interact and co-operate with each other.

The meeting also reviewed IPU field missions to examine the interaction between UN country teams and national parliaments. In the final item of business, Ms Marino participated in a debate on the Sustainable Development Goals. In her contribution, Ms Marino described Australia's commitment to the Goals which target extreme poverty, health issues and food security. In acknowledging the significant progress made to date, there is still work to do with the post 2015 agenda, particularly as it relates to economic empowerment of women and the important role that parliamentarians have to play.

Bilateral meetings

A key benefit of attending the IPU Assembly is the opportunity for Australian parliamentarians to meet their international colleagues in both formal and informal settings. By assembling representatives from such a large number and diverse range of parliaments in one place, the IPU offers a unique opportunity for delegations and individual parliamentarians to meet to discuss issues of mutual interest, to develop an understanding of different parliamentary models and to strengthen parliament-to-parliament relationships.

In addition to a wide range of informal contacts while the proceedings of the IPU were in session, the Speaker and delegation held a number of meetings as follows:

Sunday 29 March

- The Speaker met Mr Young Chin, head of delegation from the Republic of Korea
- The Speaker met Ms Amina Mohammed, (Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning)
- Meeting with the Hungarian delegation
- Speaker met Mr Urban Ahlin, Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag

Monday 30 March

- Meeting with the Moroccan delegation
- Meeting with the Lithuanian delegation
- Meeting with the Malaysian delegation

Tuesday 31 March

- Meeting with the delegation from Belarus



Meeting the Hungarian Delegation

In addition, the New Zealand and Australian delegations jointly arranged a meeting of delegations from the Pacific region which fulfils earlier undertakings to convene this informal network at each IPU Assembly. A proposal to advance this group on a more formal basis was put forward and the Australian and New Zealand delegations will undertake further scoping to achieve this.

A wide range of topics was covered at each of these meetings. The Australian proposal for an emergency item featured in many of the discussions as well as a various policy areas including opportunities for trade and development; Australia's role as provider of education and skills training and the role played by Australia in the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370.

Each of these bilateral meetings also allowed the delegation to discuss key themes under consideration at the Assembly and contribute to the strengthening of bilateral and parliament-to-parliament relationships. The delegation reiterates the important role such meetings play in supporting and enhancing more formal bilateral relationships at a government-to-government level, particularly as such meetings tend to permit more free-ranging and candid discussions.

Other functions and receptions

At the planning meeting the delegation had requested a briefing on the bi-lateral relationship and the Australian Ambassador hosted a dinner for the delegation and key embassy staff to discuss this topic. Members found this to be a useful means of learning more about the two-way relationship.

The Vietnamese hosts also arranged a number of functions including an opening ceremony at the Parliament Building and a cultural evening. These functions were well arranged and provided further opportunities for delegation members to continue discussions on matters of mutual interest.

The Speaker also attended a luncheon hosted by the IPU President, Mr Saber Chowdhury, in honour of the the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Post-2015 Development Planning, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed.

Overall conclusions

Once again, this was a productive delegation which continued to build on the work of previous assemblies. The Australian delegation is an established and hard-working member of the IPU that again made a significant contribution to proceedings at the 132nd Assembly.

In particular, the work of the Australian delegation in proposing an item for the emergency debate, and then working on a combined proposal with the Belgian delegation proved that Australia is a significant contributor to the work of the IPU. The work of delegation members in the Standing Committees is also highly regarded by fellow delegates and IPU secretariat staff. The request by IPU organisers for Ms Marino to move a vote of thanks in the closing stages of the Assembly proceedings is just one example of the regard that the Australian delegation is considered to be a focussed, professional and well organised member.

Finally, the delegation acknowledges the support provided by the Australian

Ambassador to Vietnam, (HE Mr Hugh Borrowman), and their respective staff for their assistance in the planning and conduct of the visit to Vietnam. Particular thanks are also due to Ms Rose McConnell at the post in Hanoi for advice and practical assistance she provided to the delegation in the lead-up to and throughout the Assembly. The work of Mr Peter Manvell from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra in co-ordinating briefings prior to departure and providing advice during the delegation is particularly appreciated.

Bronwyn Bishop MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

Introduction

Ms Claressa Surtees, Deputy Clerk of the House of Representatives, as a member of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) attended the meetings held in conjunction with the deliberations of the 132nd IPU Assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam. The meetings of the ASGP were held from Sunday 29 March to Wednesday 1 April 2015.

Consideration of parliamentary matters

General debates

The general meetings of the ASGP continued the format of selected general thematic debates. The chosen subjects for this session were:

- Lobbyists and interest groups: the other aspect of the legislative process; and
- Finding the structure of a parliamentary secretariat with maximum efficiency.

Communications

There were also presentations and discussions on specific parliamentary topics:

- Saudi Shura Council Relationship to Society – Hope and reality;
- Public Relations of Parliaments: The case of Turkish Parliament;
- Active transparency measures and measures related to citizens' right of access to public information in the Spanish Senate;
- The Standing Orders of political parliamentary groups – National Assembly of France;
- Powers and competences of government parties and opposition parties in a multi-party parliament – States General of the Netherlands;
- When the independence of the Legislature is put on trial: an examination of the dismissal of

members of the party in Government from the party vis-à-vis their status in Parliament – Parliament of the Republic of Uganda;

- Legislative consolidation in Portugal: better legislation, closer to the citizens;
- The formation of government in the Netherlands in 2012;
- Plain language: a promising strategy in the Swedish Parliament for clear communication and improved efficiency;
- The committee system in India: effectiveness in enforcing executive accountability; and
- The Myanmar Hluttaw and the role of ICT in its development.

Other presentations

The first presentation at this session was provided by the Hon Mr Nguyen Hanh Phuc, Chairman of the Office for Vietnam's National Assembly in addressing the Vietnamese parliamentary system.

Administrative matters

Administrative efficiency

Commencing from this session, members have been encouraged to print their own copies of papers provided to the ASGP, to access them online or downloaded to their personal portable devices. The secretariat now provides only a small number of paper copies in the meeting rooms. This initiative was well received by members and it should lead to efficiencies both in terms of administrative effort for the secretariat and costs.

New members

A number of new members were admitted to the ASGP, most were replacing the previous members who had retired or moved to other employment. In addition, one new observer from the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services was admitted.

Elections for members of the Executive Committee

Nominations for the post of one Vice President and two ordinary members of the Executive Committee were invited during the course of the meetings. As the number of candidates was greater than the number of vacancies for each category, two elections were held. The successful candidate for Vice President was Mr Philippe Schwab, Secretary General of the Council of the Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation. The successful candidates for the two positions of ordinary member were Mr Jose Manuel M. Araujo, Deputy Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, and Ms Surtees.

Related meetings

There were a number of related meetings between secretaries general and clerks addressing issues of mutual interest and exploring means of future cooperation with one another.

On Saturday 28 March, Ms Surtees attended a meeting arranged by the IPU and UNDP to consider issues raised in the context of an assembly in a post conflict situation, including the nature and evolution of the relationship between executive government and parliament, and the importance of financial and overall resource sufficiency and independence of parliament.

Next meetings

A draft agenda for the next session, from 18 to 21 October 2015 in Geneva (Switzerland), was circulated. When further developed it is to be placed on the ASGP website <http://www.asgp.co/>

Attendance at the 132nd IPU Assembly

28 March – 1 April 2015

The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, Senator Glenn Sterle, Ms Nola Marino MP, Senator Cory Bernardi and Senator Sue Lines

Friday 27 March 2015

Main delegation arrived Hanoi

Saturday 28 March 2015

Speaker arrived Hanoi

Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

Asia-Pacific Geopolitical Group Meeting

Meeting of Advisers and Secretaries to delegations

Inaugural ceremony and courtesy reception hosted by the president of the Vietnam National Assembly

Sunday 29 March 2015

Meeting of Twelve Plus Group

Meeting of the Governing Council

Assembly – start of the General Debate

Meeting of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

Meeting of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

General Debate in the Assembly (including contribution by Mrs Bishop)

Meeting of Speaker and Mr Young Chin, delegation leader from the Republic of Korea

Speaker attended a luncheon hosted by IPU President Sabre Chowdhury in honour of Ms Amina J. Mohammed

Meeting of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Meeting with the Hungarian delegation

Meeting of Speaker and Mr Urban Ahlin, Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag

Assembly – decision on the emergency item

Monday 30 March 2015

Meeting of Twelve Plus Group

Assembly: debate on the emergency item and continuation of the general debate

Reception in honour of women parliamentarians

Meeting with the Moroccan Delegation

Meeting of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Meeting of Pacific Islands delegations

Meeting with the Lithuanian delegation

Meeting with the Malaysian delegation

Dinner and briefing hosted by the Australian Ambassador

Tuesday 31 March 2015

Meeting of the Bureau of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Meeting with the delegation from Belarus

Assembly – adoption of resolutions and conclusion of General Debate

Meeting of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

State Reception hosted by the Prime Minister of Vietnam

Wednesday 1 April 2015

Meeting of Twelve Plus Group

Governing Council – adoption of resolutions and reports from specialized meetings

Departure of Speaker and some delegation members from Hanoi for Australia

Thursday 2 April 2015

Departure of remainder of delegation from Hanoi for Australia

