

The Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia

128th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly
in Quito, Ecuador and
Bilateral visit to Paraguay

Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation

21 March – 7 April 2013

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For more information about the Australian Parliament visit www.aph.gov.au or contact the International and Community Relations Office:

Email: icro.reps@aph.gov.au

Phone: +61 2 6277 4340

Fax: +61 2 6277 2000

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Membership of the Delegation

Leader	Ms Anna Burke MP Speaker of the House of Representatives Member for Chisholm, Victoria Australian Labor Party
Deputy Leader	Mr Patrick Secker MP Member for Barker, South Australia Liberal Party of Australia
Members	The Hon Dick Adams MP Member for Lyons, Tasmania Australian Labor Party Senator Anne Ruston Senator for South Australia Liberal Party of Australia (attended Inter-Parliamentary Assembly only) Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens Senator for New South Wales Australian Labor Party Mr Harry Jenkins MP Member for Scullin, Victoria Australian Labor Party (attended Inter-Parliamentary Assembly only)
Officials	Ms Lindy Franklyn Adviser to the Speaker Ms Claressa Surtees Clerk Assistant (Committees) House of Representatives (Attended the ASGP Conference) Ms Jeanette Radcliffe Department of the Senate Delegation secretary

Ms Dee Alty and Ms Sharon Secker also accompanied the delegation.

Foreword

Between 22 March and 7 April 2013, it was my pleasure to lead the Australian parliamentary delegation that attended the 128th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Quito, Ecuador and undertook the first visit by a parliamentary delegation to Paraguay.

The 128th IPU Assembly was held in Quito, Ecuador from 22 to 27 March 2013 and attended by more than 1350 participants from 118 parliaments. The Australian delegation played a prominent and active role throughout the Assembly.

The theme of the Assembly, *From unrelenting growth to purposeful development "Buen vivir": New approaches, new solutions*, reflects the IPU's desire to contribute to the current global debate on the post-2015 development agenda and the future Sustainable Development goals that will apply to both developed and developing countries. During the plenary debate, which included contributions from keynote speakers and the heads of all delegations, I highlighted Australia's work in the Pacific with the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project to address the marginalisation of women in democratic processes. I noted that aside from Australia and New Zealand, women represent just four per cent of the membership of Pacific Islands Forum parliaments. This project not only offers a means of elevating women's priorities in the policy agenda, but offers a model capable of responding to a range of issues in a cooperative way.

The Assembly adopted the Quito Communiqué which identified democratic governance as a central goal that should underpin future sustainable development goals. Other key outcomes of the Assembly included the endorsement of a presidential statement on sexual violence against women and the adoption of an Emergency Item proposed by Jordan on the role of parliaments in addressing the security and humanitarian impact of the crisis in Syria.

The Australian delegation took an active leadership role in the work of the Assembly. I would like to highlight the following contributions by the delegation during the Assembly:

- I was invited to chair a plenary session of the Assembly;
- Mr Dick Adams MP and Mr Patrick Secker MP participated in work of the Second Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade and Mr Adams chaired the drafting of the committee's resolution;
- Senator Ursula Stephens participated in the work of the Third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and chaired the drafting committee for the resolution on the use of social media to enhance citizen engagement and democracy;
- Mr Adams, Mr Jenkins and Senator Ruston were active participants in panel discussions on the rights of children with disabilities, the legalisation of drugs and nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

- Mr Jenkins and I met with the IPU Secretary-General, Mr Anders Johnsson, where he underscored the high esteem in which Australia is held at the IPU and commended the Australian Parliament for its active support of IPU initiatives;
- Mr Secker met with the IPU Secretary-General to discuss Australia's initiative to establish an international network of parliamentary whips and party coordinators;
- I met with the Speakers of the Ugandan and Suriname Parliaments to discuss initiatives to encourage greater involvement of women in parliament;
- The delegation met with delegations from China, Ireland, Morocco and New Zealand to discuss key bilateral priorities, regional developments and key items under consideration by the Assembly; and
- The Australian and New Zealand delegations hosted a reception for delegations from the Pacific region to highlight the need to facilitate greater involvement of Pacific Island parliaments in the work of the IPU.

The delegation's visit to the 'Seeds of Hope' Early Childhood Centre at the end of its visit to Ecuador provided a memorable opportunity for the delegation to gain an understanding of the tangible benefits that flow from Australia's Direct Aid Project.

The delegation's visit to Paraguay was the first by a parliamentary delegation and the delegation was humbled by the warmth and enthusiasm with which it was received at each of its meetings. The delegation came away from Paraguay with a strong impression that the current climate of economic growth and commitment to addressing fundamental issues in infrastructure, governance and social services will translate to opportunities for greater Australian involvement in Paraguay.

The delegation is indebted to the many people who contributed to making this a successful delegation. I would like to express sincere thanks to the Parliament of Ecuador for its effective organisation of the 128th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly and to the Parliament of Paraguay for facilitating the opportunity to meet with so many senior members of parliament.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by Australia's missions to Chile and Argentina which contributed significantly to the success of the delegation. Australia's representatives in both missions are to be commended for their work and careful attention to detail.

The delegation is grateful to HE Mr Tim Kane, Australia's Ambassador to Chile, for making time to brief the committee and accompany it on its visit to the 'Seeds of Hope' Early Childhood Centre. Particular thanks are due to Mr Diwaka Prakash for the high standard of advice and practical assistance he provided to the delegation during the IPU Assembly. The delegation is also grateful to HE Ms Patricia Holmes, Australia's Ambassador to Argentina, and her staff for the excellent program provided for the delegation in Paraguay and for the time and support lent to the delegation's visit.

The delegation thanks the officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the staff of the Parliamentary Library for the comprehensive and informative briefings

provided prior to the delegation's departure. The delegation also wishes to thank Mr Geoff Barnett and other staff of the International Community Relations Office, for their support and assistance, the staff of FCm Travel Solutions and Mr Tony Styles, Finance Section, Department of the Senate.

Finally, I thank my fellow delegates for their thoughtful participation in the delegation's meetings and their commitment to our program of work.



The Australian delegation to the 128th IPU Assembly

Ms Anna Burke MP

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Chapter 1

128th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

Background

1.1 The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organisation of parliaments of sovereign states, providing 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.

1.2 There are currently 162 national parliaments who are members of the IPU and ten regional parliamentary assemblies who are associate members.¹ Most members are affiliated with one of the six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.

1.3 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.

1.4 The Australian Parliament plays an active role in supporting a number of these activities in partnership with the IPU.

1.5 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 the meetings of specialist committees, working groups and geopolitical groups.

1 A list of current members of the IPU is available on the IPU website:
<http://www.ipu.org/english/whatipu.htm>

Agenda for the 128th IPU Assembly

1.6 The agenda of the 128th IPU Assembly, which was held in Quito, Ecuador from 22 to 27 March 2013 addressed the following items:

- a General Debate in the plenary of the Assembly on the overall theme: *From unrelenting growth to purposeful development “Buen Vivir”*: New approaches, new solutions;
- debate on an Emergency Item;
- 190th session of the IPU Governing Council, which is the policy-making body of the IPU;
- debates within three standing committees on topics chosen at the previous April Assembly and discussed at the previous October Assembly;
- meetings of the six geopolitical groups; and
- meetings of ad hoc committees established by the Governing Council.

1.7 In addition to participating in each of these meetings, members of the Australian delegation participated in:

- an informal meeting of parliamentary whips;
- bilateral meetings with members of other delegations;
- panel discussions and workshops; and
- the launch of the Spanish edition of the Handbook for Parliamentarians on Supporting Nuclear Non-Proliferation and disarmament.

1.8 The Australian delegation's program at the IPU Assembly is at Appendix 1 to this report. A detailed report of the 128th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings is available online.²

General Debate

1.9 The General Debate reflected on the theme: *From unrelenting growth to purposeful development “Buen Vivir”*: New Approaches, New Solutions. This theme was chosen as a contribution to the global debate currently underway on the post-2015 development agenda and the future Sustainable Development Goals. The theme was considered over three days including presentations by keynote speakers and representatives from all delegations.

1.10 Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Assembly, the President of Ecuador, Mr Rafael Correa Delgado underscored the relevance and topicality of the overall theme for general debate, particularly in the context of the current global consultations aimed at shaping the next generation of development goals.³

2 Refer: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

3 The President's speech is available online at: <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/128/president-correa-en.pdf>

1.11 Speaking in a moderated discussion prior to the General Debate, Ms Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, Mr Saba Chowdhury MP (Bangladesh) and Senator Gustavo Penadés (Uruguay) reflected on their exchanges with the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda⁴ and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)–led Global Thematic Consultation on Governance and the Post-2015 Development Framework.⁵ They underscored the importance of democratic governance forming part of the new development framework, both as a stand-alone goal and as a dimension of other goals.⁶

1.12 In her keynote address to the Assembly Ms Rebecca Grynspan, UNDP Assistant Administrator, highlighted the crucial role of parliaments and parliamentarians in advancing a new vision of sustainable development. She said that the Millennium Development Goals had demonstrated that a broad, clear and bold vision could generate grassroots engagement, mobilise resources and bring diverse actors together to work on a common cause. The future challenge would be to sustain positive trends through new approaches which would inevitably call for enhanced equity and improved governance, while addressing environmental pressures and managing demographic change. In order to rise to this challenge, she said that the international community must agree on a reinvigorated and transformational global agenda and noted that parliamentarians were better placed than anyone to contribute to such an agenda.⁷

1.13 Speaking during the General Debate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ms Anna Burke MP said purposeful development for the Australian Parliament involves reaching all sections of society and noted that women's voices often go unheard in the political process. She highlighted Australia's efforts through the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Project to tackle the continuing under-representation of women in parliament and to elevate women's priorities on the parliamentary agenda. She noted that aside from Australia and New Zealand, women represent just four per cent of the membership of Pacific Islands Forum parliaments. By working with individual women MPs, parliaments and parliamentary staff the project seeks to foster relationships between women MPs in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific to address existing institutional and cultural barriers to women's inclusion in politics. She said that 'Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships allows us to work together to strengthen parliaments and at the same time address common issues of interest. [The project] is showing the world what can be done when we work together – not just women, but with men, with civil society and with the international

4 Monrovia, Liberia, January 2013.

5 Johannesburg, South Africa, 28 February to 1 March 2013.

6 Results of the 128th IPU Assembly and related meetings, pp 6-7 <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

7 Results of the 128th IPU Assembly and related meetings, p. 7 <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/results.pdf>

community.' She said that this very flexible way of providing assistance could be applied to any issue and in any cultural or regional context.⁸

1.14 At the end of the debate the Assembly issued the Quito Communiqué - a political statement that the IPU will share with the UN.⁹



The Speaker, Ms Anna Burke MP presiding over the plenary of the 128th Assembly

Emergency Item

1.15 At each Assembly a topic is selected for emergency consideration and a resolution is adopted on the topic. Any member country of the IPU may request the inclusion of an emergency item. The rules of the Assembly provide that only one emergency item may be included on the Assembly agenda. Where more than one topic is proposed the plenary session selects one topic either by consensus or vote.

1.16 Six requests for the inclusion of an emergency item were received.¹⁰ Following a roll-call vote, the following item put forward by Jordan was adopted and added to the Assembly agenda: *The status of Syrian refugees: The role of parliaments in bringing pressure to bear on their governments to assume their international and humanitarian responsibility towards these refugees and to support the neighbouring countries that receive them.* The item was then debated and a drafting committee appointed to prepare a draft resolution for consideration by the plenary.

8 Ms Burke's speech is reprinted in full at Appendix 2 to this report.

9 The Quito Communiqué is available online at: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/quito-comm.htm>

10 Proposals were received from Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United Kingdom. After taking the floor, the delegations of New Zealand and Mexico decided to withdraw their proposals and instead submit them for consideration to the Third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights. The delegation of the United Kingdom withdrew its proposal in favour of the resolution of Jordan. The full text of the emergency items can be accessed online at: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128agnd.htm>.

1.17 At its last sitting on 27 March 2013 the Assembly adopted the resolution by consensus.¹¹ The resolution, which is the IPU's second resolution on Syria in 12 months, focusses on the growing refugee crisis involving more than one million Syrians in neighbouring countries. Through the resolution, the IPU urges parties in Syria to end violence immediately. The resolution calls on international and regional parties to help identify ways to end the conflict peacefully while safeguarding Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as the security and human rights of its citizens.¹²

Standing committees

1.18 Over the course of the Assembly, the three Standing Committees met to debate themes chosen at the 126th IPU Assembly in Kampala, Uganda. Each committee received a presentation on a draft report and resolution prepared by co-rapporteurs before debating the theme and finalising a resolution for consideration by the Assembly. Each committee's Bureau met separately to consider proposed themes for consideration at the 130th IPU Assembly, before putting a recommendation to the plenary of the committee and to the Assembly.

First Standing Committee – Peace and International Security

1.19 First Standing Committee debated the theme: *Enforcing the responsibility to protect: the role of parliament in safeguarding civilians' lives.*

1.20 The committee's resolution calls on parliaments to ensure governments protect their people against genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity through legislation, the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and by overseeing government action to combat terrorism. The committee resolved that if national authorities fail to safeguard their population, then collective action should be applied through the UN Security Council. The resolution stresses the need for sustained peace-building assistance to post conflict situations and urges parliamentarians to make sure their governments commit the necessary funds to the reconstruction of countries emerging from crisis.¹³

1.21 At the 130th IPU Assembly, the First Standing Committee will consider the theme: *Towards a nuclear-weapon free world: The contribution of parliaments.*

11 Reservations on the use of the word 'security' in the title of the resolution were expressed by 11 delegations. The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic expressed reservations on several parts of the resolution which it felt violated its country's sovereignty. Cuba expressed a reservation on the first preambular paragraph.

12 The resolution on the Emergency Item proposed by Syria is available online at: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/Res-emrg.htm>

13 The First Standing Committee's resolution is available online at: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/Res-1.htm>

Second Standing Committee – Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

1.22 Mr Dick Adams MP and Mr Patrick Secker MP participated in the plenary debate of the Second Standing Committee on the theme: *Fair trade and innovative mechanisms for sustainable development*.

1.23 Mr Adams was appointed chair of the drafting committee and was recognised by the plenary for the efficient manner in which he facilitated that committee's consideration of 119 amendments to the preliminary draft resolution.

1.24 The committee's resolution urges parliamentarians and the IPU to take the lead in advocating fair trade as a means of ensuring sustainable development. It calls for support for fair trade as an integral component of the post-2015 sustainable development goals. In addition, parliaments and governments should explore more innovative, open and transparent financing mechanisms to allow for more effective funding of fair-trade projects.¹⁴

1.25 Mr Adams represented the Asia Pacific Geopolitical Group on the committee's Bureau and participated in the selection of the committee's theme for 130th Assembly: *Towards risk-resilient development: Taking into consideration demographic trends and natural constraints*.

Third Standing Committee – Democracy and Human Rights

1.26 Senator Ursula Stephens participated in the Third Standing Committee's debate on the theme: *the use of media, including social media, to enhance citizen engagement and democracy*.

1.27 The drafting committee, which was chaired by Senator Stephens, adopted a number of proposed amendments in letter or spirit. The resolution, which was adopted unanimously without reservation, calls on parliaments to use social media to better inform and engage with their citizens while at the same time protecting the right to freedom of expression on and off-line. The resolution also underscores the importance of a free, open and accessible internet as a tool for citizen engagement and the need for parliaments to take responsibility for ensuring citizen's access to free and secure online communications.¹⁵

1.28 The resolution followed the release of the IPU's Social Media Guidelines for Parliament. These guidelines aim to encourage more widespread and effective use of social media by parliaments, as well as provide guidance to those responsible for managing social media.

1.29 At its sitting on 26 March, the committee elected its new Bureau. Most candidates submitted by the geopolitical groups were elected unopposed. A secret ballot was held to choose the titular member for the Asia-Pacific Group from among

14 The Second Standing Committee's resolution is available online at: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/Res-2.htm>

15 The Third Standing Committee's resolution is available online at: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/128/Res-3.htm>

three candidates, including Senator Stephens.¹⁶ While unsuccessful, Senator Stephens was able to use the opportunity to highlight the importance of ensuring the interests of Pacific Island Parliaments are considered by the Bureau and in the work of the committee.

1.30 During the 130th Assembly, the Third Standing Committee will debate the theme: *the Role of parliaments in protecting the rights of children, in particular unaccompanied migrant children, and in preventing their exploitation in situations of war and conflict.*

Joint Meeting of Standing Committee Bureaux

1.31 At the 127th IPU Assembly in Quebec City, the Governing Council endorsed a set of proposals to modify the format of future IPU Assemblies and improve the functioning of the Standing Committees and their Bureaux. In essence, it was agreed that the Standing Committees should be given broader roles and their Bureaux should play a more active role in planning and guiding committee work, with a view to allowing Standing Committees greater flexibility in their choice of agenda and how they carry out their work.

1.32 During the 128th Assembly Mr Adams attended a joint meeting of Standing Committee Bureaux which was convened to consider these proposals in greater detail. The meeting reached a consensus over the scheduling of committee work, the use of discussions, hearings and field trips and inclusion of explanatory memoranda and other supporting material with committee resolutions.

192nd Session of the Governing Council

1.33 The Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the IPU. Several committees and working groups fall under the Governing Council and report to it on their work.

1.34 The Governing Council considered reports on the financial situation of the IPU and noted that the overall financial position of the IPU at 28 February 2013 was sound. The IPU had recorded a total operating surplus of CHF 1,015,711 for 2012, largely due to a higher level of voluntary funding than budgeted, savings in staffing and administrative costs, deferral of the IPU website development expenditure to 2013 and International Public Sector Accounting Standards adjustments required for the legacy Pension Fund and reserves.

1.35 The IPU is funded by its membership and through voluntary funds provided by donors. The Council noted that arrears of contributions currently stood at CHF 652,000 with further payments of arrears expected shortly. The overall expenditure of the IPU was considered to be on track at 93 per cent of the year-to-date-budget.

1.36 The Australian delegation attended each of the sessions of the Governing Council and Mr Harry Jenkins MP participated in the work of the Advisory Group to the IPU Committee on UN Affairs, which reports to the Governing Council.

16 The nominees were: Ms Farkhunda Zahra Naderi (Afghanistan), Mr Moayed Hosseini Sadr (Iran) and Senator Ursula Stephens (Australia). Ms Naderi was elected by absolute majority.

Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

1.37 The IPU Committee on UN Affairs seeks to foster an effective partnership between the IPU and the UN. The Committee meets once a year in plenary session during the October Assembly. The Advisory Group of the Committee meets during both Assemblies to prepare the work of the Committee.

1.38 The Advisory Group discussed the proposals to enhance the functioning of IPU standing committees and the role of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs. The Advisory Group also discussed its recent field missions to examine One UN reform and system-wide coherence and the agenda of the annual session of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs to be held in Geneva in October 2013.¹⁷

IPU action to strengthen democracy and parliamentary institutions

1.39 The Governing Council took note of an oral report by the Deputy Secretary-General and Director of the Division of Programmes, Mr Martin Chungong, on recent IPU activities to strengthen democracy and parliamentary institutions. In 2012, the IPU commenced implementation of a five-year strategy: Better Parliaments, Stronger Democracies. The strategy is underpinned by the IPU's vision to assist parliaments and parliamentarians in articulating and responding to people's needs and their aspirations for peace, human rights, gender equality and development.

1.40 Mr Chungong noted that the IPU is cooperating with the parliaments of Australia and New Zealand in developing a programme of assistance to Pacific Island parliaments. Under this program, the IPU will serve as a principal partner in developing and delivering assistance to Pacific Island parliaments on an ongoing basis. In August 2012, Mr Chungong represented the IPU at a two-day workshop in Samoa, which brought together members of parliaments from the South Pacific. The discussions focussed on community outreach and the evolving relationship between parliaments and their constituents.

Meetings of geopolitical groups

1.41 The IPU has six geopolitical groups that meet during the assemblies to discuss the operation and activities of the IPU. Geopolitical groups play an important role in the functioning of the IPU through consideration of matters on the IPU Agenda and, where possible, agreeing a group position. Candidatures for positions on IPU committees are also considered and submitted through the geopolitical groups.

1.42 Most member countries are members of at least one of these groups. Australia is a member of two geopolitical groups: the Asia-Pacific Group and the Twelve Plus Group.¹⁸ Members of the Australian delegation participated in meetings of both groups at the 128th Assembly.

17 A detailed report on the work and decisions of this Advisory Group is available online at:

18 Pursuant to Article 25 of the Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Australia has informed the Secretary General that where it proposes to submit candidatures for positions within the IPU it will do so through the Asia-Pacific Group.

Asia Pacific Geopolitical Group

1.43 Mr Dick Adams MP and Mr Patrick Secker MP represented the Australian delegation at the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) meeting. It received reports on the IPU Executive Committee meeting held on 20 March 2013 and the ASEAN+3 Group meeting. The committee discussed proposals for the Emergency Item and for themes for discussion during the 130th IPU Assembly but did not reach a decision to endorse particular proposals. The committee also considered nominations for vacancies. While the committee endorsed nominations for most positions, the Chair of the committee called on the five nominees for the position of titular member of the Bureau of the Third Standing Committee, of which Senator Ursula Stephens was one, to meet to determine the candidacy in preference to a vote within the Group.

1.44 The committee's meeting concluded with an informative presentation from Mr Saber Chowdhury (Bangladesh) on the subject: climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the context of sustainable development.

Twelve Plus Group

1.45 The Twelve Plus Group met three times during the 128th IPU Assembly and considered a number of matters on the Assembly agenda in detail. The Twelve Plus Group paid particular attention to the following matters:

- Report from Group representatives on the work of the Sub-committee on Finance, the IPU Executive Committee and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians;
- Matters relating to the IPU, including amendments to the Statutes and Rules; procedures for the selection of the new Secretary-General and implementation of the IPU Strategy, including the Reform of the Standing Committees and Assembly Format;
- The application for membership of the Twelve Plus Group by the Parliament of the Ukraine; and
- Proposals for the Emergency Item and themes for consideration by Standing Committees during the 130th IPU Assembly.

Meeting of parliamentary whips

1.46 At the initiative of Mr Joel Fitzgibbon MP, a second meeting of parliamentary whips and political party coordinators was held on 24 March 2013. An inaugural meeting was held in the margins of the 127th IPU Assembly in Quebec City with a view to establishing a network to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience and enhance the professional development of those who hold coordination roles within parliaments.

1.47 In the absence of Mr Fitzgibbon, the meeting was chaired by Mr Patrick Secker MP. Mr Harry Jenkins MP also attended along with delegates from: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Canada, Chad, Chile, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia, New Zealand, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Uganda.

1.48 The group continued the discussion, commenced during the first meeting, of the establishment of a pilot programme of the network for a period of 18 months. The aim of the network would be to enhance professional development, encourage information sharing, promote the work and objectives of the IPU and foster inter-parliamentary cooperation.

1.49 The name of the network was discussed and, although no consensus was reached, it was decided that the name should be chosen to attract a wider audience and that the issue should be debated further. The meeting agreed to adopt the provisional title: IPU Parliamentary Coordinators' Network. It was agreed that meetings of the network should be hosted under the auspices of the IPU and to explore whether the new IPU website could host the network's website. A proposal was made to organise a workshop for parliamentary whips and party coordinators.

Panel discussions and workshops

Panel discussion on addressing the rights of children with disabilities

1.50 Mr Dick Adams MP and Senator Anne Ruston participated in this important discussion between UN experts, parliamentarians and civil society representatives. The session provided an opportunity for parliamentarians to exchange data and experiences of current best practice in various countries and to discuss how best to address the rights of children with disabilities through their parliamentary work.

1.51 Participants drew up a series of recommendations to address the following points:

- arrangements for children with disabilities should be given priority in terms of the measures taken or still to be taken to promote the rights of the child;
- parliamentarians in countries that had still to accede to the international instruments governing the rights of children with disabilities¹⁹, should ratify and incorporate them into their national legislation;
- arrangements for children with disabilities need to be specific to their needs, not embedded within general policies, and should be aimed at integrating and including children with disabilities through appropriate education systems;
- the need to heighten public awareness to encourage a better perception of disability and facilitate acceptance within communities; and
- the need to enact appropriate legislation, allocating adequate resources for the formulation of tailored policy and the implementation of related programs and following up the implementation of national plans of action.

Panel discussion on the legalisation of drugs

1.52 Mr Dick Adams MP participated in a panel discussion on the theme *The legalisation of drugs: Can it help curb organised crime?* which focused on the

19 Notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

emerging debate on the potential benefits and challenges of the legalisation or decriminalisation of drugs. Panellists addressed the successes and challenges of current drug policies in consumer, supplier and transit countries.

1.53 It was agreed that the problems of drugs transcended individual States' borders and that any new solutions to fight them had to be found at the global and regional levels. Within national borders the debate on drugs had to take place at all levels of society and evidence on the impact and magnitude of the drug problem had to be collected before potential new policies were developed. It was also agreed that parliaments had a key role to play in fostering debate and that the IPU had an important role to play in taking the debate further.

Launch of handbook supporting nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament

1.54 Mr Jenkins attended the launch by Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (PNND) of the Spanish edition of a *Handbook for Parliamentarians on Supporting Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament*.

1.55 This Handbook, produced jointly by the IPU and PNND, is intended to assist parliaments and parliamentarians to take action in implementing the 2009 IPU Resolution to take action on advancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. That resolution provides a comprehensive set of practical recommendations on what parliaments could do to ensure universal ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and promote the UN Secretary-General's five-point plan for nuclear disarmament. The handbook identifies existing examples of good parliamentary practice in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and offers recommendations for further parliamentary action.

1.56 Australia has played an active role in the IPU's consideration of nuclear disarmament over successive IPU Assemblies. At the 118th Assembly in Cape Town the Australian Delegation proposed the full debate on this issue that led to the 2009 resolution. Since then Australia has participated in workshops and panel sessions which have highlighted steps member parliaments are taking to implement the resolution and further mobilise parliamentary action to meet the goal of a nuclear weapon-free world. This work will continue at the 130th IPU Assembly in 2014 through the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security's consideration of the topic: towards a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World: the Contribution of Parliaments.

Bilateral meetings

1.57 The Australian delegation took the opportunity presented by the IPU Assembly to participate in meetings with delegations from China, Ireland, Morocco, and New Zealand. These meetings allowed the delegation to contribute to the strengthening of bilateral and parliament to parliament relationships, regional developments and cooperate in work on key themes under consideration at the Assembly. The delegation noted that such meetings have an important role to play in developing relationships with other parliaments, particularly as they frequently permit more free ranging and candid discussions to occur.

1.58 In addition to these meetings, Ms Burke met informally with the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, The Hon Rebecca Kadaga, and the Speaker of the National Assembly of Suriname, Ms Jennifer Simons. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss a range of initiatives to encourage more women to enter parliament as well as initiatives to retain senior women in parliament.



The Speaker and the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, The Hon Rebecca Kadaga MP

Meeting with Chinese Delegation

1.59 The delegation's meeting with the Chinese delegation, led by Mr Chen Changzhi, provided a welcome opportunity to further strengthen the relationship between the Australian Parliament and the National People's Congress. Mr Chen extended best wishes from the Chairman of the People's Congress, Mr Zhang Dejiang, to the Australian Parliament and noted that Australia is a good friend of the Chinese people. He said closer relationships between parliaments help to promote mutual understanding and can lend new impetus to the bilateral relationship between the two countries. He noted that the bilateral relationship is growing stronger, assisted by frequent visits between the two countries and said that China is ready to work on a long term strategic approach to the development of bilateral relations between the two countries and outlined a strategy for achieving this based on:

- a strong program of exchanges and visits to share views on issues of mutual interest;
- a commitment to develop and improve the existing mechanisms for regular exchange between the two parliaments;
- cooperation between special committees, parliamentary friendship groups and staff, particularly in relation to the legislative process; and
- greater emphasis on exchanges and cooperation in international fora.

1.60 The Australian delegation assured the Chinese delegation that these points are of equal importance to the Australian Parliament. The delegation noted recent exchanges and visits between the two parliaments and commented that such visits were important in building an understanding between the two countries. Senator Stephens said that she had been privileged to visit China in 2012 and come away with

a positive impression of China's progress in infrastructure development and in the use of clean energy. Ms Burke noted the strong relationship established through Parliamentary Friendship Groups and said that she had been sorry to relinquish her position as Chair of the China-Australia Friendship Group.

1.61 The Australian delegation agreed that it is important to build a strong understanding between parliaments, observing that when there are good relationships between parliaments this can assist when there are differences of opinion over policy. Mr Jenkins observed that the knowledge that China and Australia come to the negotiating table as friends, even when there are differences of opinion, is important for maintaining a productive dialogue on difficult issues. He said that the Australian Parliament has always been grateful that this is understood by both parties.



The delegation's meeting with the Chinese Delegation

Meeting with Moroccan Delegation

1.62 The Moroccan delegation led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Karim Ghellab, said that the Hon Moroccan Parliament has a strong interest in developing its relationship with the Australian Parliament. He recalled his meeting with the President of the Senate, Senator John Hogg in 2012 and complemented Australia on the effort it makes to develop and maintain parliamentary relationships, despite the significant distance involved.

1.63 The Australian delegation was interested to learn about recent political developments in Morocco, particularly the situation of minority groups in the Western Sahara. Mr Ghellab emphasised the historical significance of the Western Sahara for Morocco. He stressed that the region was historically Moroccan and that Morocco is committed to working toward a peaceful solution. The Australian delegation emphasised the importance of achieving stability in the area for all concerned.

1.64 Mr Ghellab said that the series of demonstrations across Morocco and the Western Sahara since 2011 had led to a commitment to further reforms including steps to implement parliamentary accountability mechanisms, and initiatives to address gender equality in parliament, human rights, decentralisation to the regions and

cultural reforms including recognition of two official languages, Arabic and Ahmazil, with the intention that both will be used in parliament.



The Australian and Moroccan Delegations

Meeting with Irish Delegation

1.65 The delegation's meeting with the delegation from the Irish Parliament, led by the Cathaoirleach (Chairperson) of the Seanad, Senator Paddy Burke, provided an opportunity to discuss Ireland's efforts to address its current economic situation since the two delegations had met in the margins of the 127th IPU Assembly in Quebec. Senator Burke provided a candid assessment of the situation, describing concerns regarding the impact of further significant budget cuts on the domestic economy. He said that the Irish economy was still facing challenging times but emphasised the Irish Government's commitment to continue to work to place the economy on a more sustainable footing.

1.66 Senator Burke said how pleased the Irish Parliament had been to welcome the recent Australian delegation to Ireland. He also took the opportunity to provide the delegation with an update on Ireland's efforts to encourage Irish descendants living overseas to re-establish their ties to Ireland through *The Gathering*. This tourism-led initiative aims to mobilise the Irish diaspora to return to Ireland during 2013 to be part of specially organised local gatherings and events throughout the year. He said an important part of this initiative was responding to interest in tracing links to Ireland and documenting Irish migration to countries like Australia.

1.67 The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss Australia's system of compulsory voting. The Australian delegation noted that abuse of the system is rare and that the report on each election by the Joint Select Committee on Electoral Reform provided an opportunity to air issues and make recommendations for change.



The Australian and Irish Delegations

Meeting with New Zealand Delegation

1.68 The Australian and New Zealand delegations have a strong working relationship within the IPU. Both Parliaments share a commitment to ensuring the Pacific Island parliaments have a voice in the IPU and have collaborated over a number of years to support a range of parliamentary strengthening initiatives within the Pacific. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the New Zealand delegation's proposal that gender equity be adopted as a topic for discussion at the 130th Assembly.

1.69 The meeting also provided an opportunity for the delegations to discuss questions surrounding access to social security assistance for the roughly 600,000 New Zealand nationals resident in Australia. The New Zealand delegation expressed concern that while New Zealanders working in Australia pay taxation and superannuation they do not receive access to social security. The Australian delegation noted that Australian immigration law requires all immigrants to apply for citizenship in order to benefit from social security assistance.

1.70 The New Zealand delegation expressed interest in Australia's progress toward the constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians. The Australian delegation outlined the process for constitutional change in Australia. They noted that the passage of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012 was a key step toward constitutional recognition and that there is bipartisan support for a referendum.

Reception for Pacific Parliaments

1.71 For some time, Australian delegations to IPU Assemblies have raised the concern that few Pacific Island parliaments attend meetings of the IPU. At previous Assemblies the Australian delegation has convened meetings and informal gatherings to facilitate discussion of the specific needs of Pacific Island parliaments and the obstacles to their participation in the IPU.

1.72 During the 128th Assembly the Australian and New Zealand delegations hosted a reception for Pacific parliaments. In welcoming delegations to the reception, Ms Burke stressed the importance of informal events of this kind in providing an opportunity for delegations to meet away from the formalities of the plenary and the working groups. She said that this was particularly important for Pacific parliaments as it was usually an enormous effort for them to attend the meetings of the IPU.

1.73 Ms Burke noted that many of the parliaments in attendance were engaged in capacity building activities with parliaments throughout the region and mentioned Australia's involvement in the successful forum held in Sydney as part of the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnership project. The Australian parliament is also committed to parliamentary strengthening and meeting the needs of parliaments within the region by working with both members of parliament and parliamentary staff to mentor and provide practical support for parliamentary processes, Hansard, committee work and legislative drafting.

1.74 Ms Burke concluded by noting that while the Pacific parliaments were not large in numbers compared to other regions, they have a unique and important voice which they need to make heard. The reception was well attended and there was interest in similar informal events at future Assemblies.

Meetings with the IPU Secretary-General

1.75 The Australian delegation was pleased to have two opportunities to meet with the Secretary-General of the IPU, Mr Anders Johnsson. In his meeting with Ms Burke and Mr Jenkins, Mr Johnsson said that the IPU places great value on its relationship with the Australian Parliament. He said that Australia's practical support for the IPU's activities with developing parliaments is greatly appreciated and made particular mention of Australia's assistance to the Myanmar Parliament and its work to engage parliaments in the Pacific Island Region in the work of the IPU. Mr Johnsson said that the IPU hoped it could look to Australia to continue to show leadership and practical assistance for the IPU's work to strengthen and support parliaments.

1.76 The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss initiatives to encourage greater participation by women in parliaments and of women parliamentarians at the IPU. Mr Johnsson noted the significant gains made in this area. He said that a record number of women parliamentarians had attended the 128th Assembly, breaking the 200 mark for the first time. He also said that there were only four delegations to the 128th IPU Assembly that did not include women members of parliament.

1.77 Mr Johnsson also met with Mr Secker to discuss the Australian initiative to establish an international network for whips and others with similar roles in parliament. Mr Johnsson said that there was a great deal of support for the initiative

within the IPU and that he hoped the network would continue to work closely with the IPU to ensure an integrated approach.

1.78 Mr Secker agreed that there are benefits for both the IPU and the network in working closely together and expressed Australia's appreciation for the IPU's practical support for the two meetings organised in the margins of the 127th and 128th Assemblies.

Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments

1.79 Ms Claressa Surtees, Clerk Assistant (Committees), of the House of Representatives, attended the meetings of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments (ASGP) held in conjunction with the 128th IPU Assembly. The meetings of the ASGP were held from 23 to 27 March 2013. Ms Surtees participated in the proceedings of the ASGP as the substitute of Mr Bernard Wright, Clerk of the House, and played a full role in relation to meetings, discussions and deliberations.

1.80 The ASGP, is constituted as a consultative body of the IPU to facilitate personal contacts between holders of the office of Secretary-General in any parliamentary assembly. The ASGP's meetings focus on the law, procedure, practice and working methods of different parliaments and seek to propose measures for improving those methods and for securing co-operation between the services of different parliaments.

1.81 A report of the meetings of the ASGP in Quito, Ecuador is at Appendix 3 to this report.



Delegates to the Meetings of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments, Quito, Ecuador.

Visit to 'Seeds of Hope' Early Childhood Centre, Quito

1.82 Following the conclusion of the 128th Assembly, the delegation was honoured to be invited to visit the 'Seeds of Hope' Early Childhood Centre where it received a very warm welcome from the children, their teachers and parents. The displays staged by the children were both educative and touching and were a high point of the delegation's visit to Quito.

1.83 The delegation was impressed by the strong community support for the centre and was proud that through the Direct Aid Project (DAP) administered by the Australian Embassy in Santiago, Chile, Australia had been able to bolster the efforts of the community to refurbish the centre.

1.84 Mr Alois Arnold, the Executive Director of the Association of Solidarity and Action (ASA) which had sponsored the centre's application, provided an overview of the changing environment for NGOs within Ecuador. He said that when the organisation was first established by missionaries fifteen years ago, there were very few social support structures within the community. He said that by working closely with the community, the Association had been able to address some of the areas of highest need, including childcare, healthcare and housing. He stressed that there was still much to be done, but that initiatives such as the Australian Government's DAP program played a significant part in supporting these efforts. He also noted that recently the Ecuadorian Government had begun to assume a higher degree of responsibility for social development projects and that as a result NGOs like ASA were assuming a different role and were looking forward to working closely with the government.

1.85 The delegation heard how the state of disrepair of a major retaining wall at the centre had compromised both the security of the centre and the safety of the children. Without financial assistance to repair the wall the centre would have needed to close. The grant of A\$19,000 had facilitated the purchase of raw materials and the fathers of the children had contributed their labour to complete the project. The centre was now able to focus on other refurbishment projects and is well advanced in the construction of a new facility for infants. The flow on benefits of the childcare centre to the surrounding community underscored for the delegation the value of the DAP program in directing financial assistance to projects that could leverage off such strong community support to address areas of obvious need. The delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the children, parents and teachers of the 'Seeds of Hope' Infant Centre for their warm welcome and generous hospitality.

Conclusion and acknowledgements

1.86 The delegation expresses its sincere thanks to the Parliament of Ecuador for its organisation of the 128th IPU Assembly. The Assembly provided an effective forum for parliamentarians to engage and increase their understanding of a range of issues of global interest and concern and to establish contacts with parliamentary colleagues and exchange information and experience.

1.87 The Australian delegation recognises that as members of a mature parliamentary system there is much that it can contribute through the work of the IPU. Members of the delegation were honoured to be able to fulfil key leadership roles during the Assembly. The Assembly also provided an opportunity for Australia to make positive contributions to strengthen parliaments and democracy, by sharing the experience of the Pacific Women's Parliamentary partnership project, highlighting the particular interests of Pacific Island Parliaments and progressing its initiative to establish an international whips network. Finally, the Assembly afforded the

delegation an important opportunity to strengthen its relationships with other parliaments through bilateral meetings and informal discussions.

1.88 The delegation would like to acknowledge the support provided by Australia's Ambassador to Chile, HE Mr Tim Kane, and Mr Diwaka Prakash throughout the delegation's visit to Ecuador. Ambassador Kane provided the delegation with an excellent briefing and Mr Prakash provided invaluable advice and practical assistance throughout the IPU Assembly. The delegation would also like to acknowledge the informative and comprehensive briefing materials provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Parliamentary Library prior to the delegation's departure. These materials greatly assisted the delegation in its work during the Assembly.

Chapter 2

Visit to Paraguay

2.1 Following the 128th IPU Assembly the delegation was privileged to undertake a bilateral visit to Paraguay. This was the first visit by an Australian parliamentary delegation to Paraguay and the delegation was moved by the enthusiastic and warm welcome it received.

2.2 Australia enjoys a growing and positive relationship with Paraguay. As agricultural producers and exporters Australia and Paraguay share a strong commitment to achieving fairer international trade in agricultural products through membership of the Cairns Group and cooperation in other multilateral fora. Australia welcomes Paraguay's recent decision to join the Services Plurilateral negotiations within the World Trade Organisation. Australia is also increasing its engagement with Paraguay through development cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

2.3 Australia's relationship with Paraguay has been strengthened by the opening of a Consulate headed by an honorary consul in Asunción in January 2011. Australia also has non-resident accreditation to Paraguay through the Australian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Parliament-to-parliament relations

2.4 The delegation's visit coincided with the lead up to the national election in Paraguay on 21 April 2013. The delegation therefore expresses its sincere thanks to those members of the Paraguay Parliament who made time available to meet with the delegation. From the delegation's perspective, the timing of the visit provided an excellent opportunity to gain a closer understanding of the parliamentary system in Paraguay.

2.5 Paraguay is a constitutional republic headed by a directly elected president with a bicameral legislature. The executive branch is headed by the President, elected by popular vote for a five year term. The President appoints a Cabinet of ministers. The legislative branch consists of an 80 member Chamber of Deputies and a 45 member Senate. Both houses of Congress are popularly elected for a five year term under a system of proportional representation, based on local electoral districts for the Chamber of Deputies and on nationwide results for the Senate.

2.6 The election and the impeachment of former President Fernando Lugo in June 2012, following a clash between police and farmers, was a topic of much discussion throughout the delegation's visit, as was Paraguay's subsequent suspension from Mercosur and Unasur.

Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice

2.7 The President of the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice, Minister Alberto Ramirez Zambonini, told the delegation that the Tribunal was aware that, due to the circumstances surrounding President Lugo's removal from office, Paraguay's national election would be closely watched by the international community. He said that the European Community, the United States and the Association of Latin American

Electoral Commissions were each sending large delegations to monitor the elections. Unasur is also sending delegates. Mr Zambonini said that at first the Paraguay Government had opposed this, but that the Tribunal supports it and the Government had accorded the delegation the freedom to move around the country. Mr Zambonini emphasised that all parties to the process would participate under the same rules and that he was hopeful of a good process.

2.8 Mr Zambonini said that over two million voters would participate in the elections and that Paraguay has the fastest growing electoral roll in the world, with 93 per cent of eligible voters registered. As a result of legislation passed in 2011, Paraguayan citizens resident in the United States, Argentina and Spain would be eligible to vote in the elections. He expressed confidence that new technology implemented this year would enable the speedy announcement of results.

2.9 The delegation noted that all major parties were represented at the meeting with the delegation and that each had expressed their party's confidence in the electoral process. The Speaker, Ms Anna Burke MP, said that the delegation understood the need to ensure that all aspects of the electoral process were above suspicion and that the right of citizens to vote is protected. She noted the bipartisan representation at the meeting and said that when Australian parliamentary delegations travel abroad the Parliament always ensures that all major political parties are represented. She said that the delegation was in Paraguay to engage as representatives of the Australian Parliament.



The Speaker and Mr Secker with Minister Alberto Ramirez Zambonini, President of the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice

Vice-President of Paraguay

2.10 The delegation's meeting with the Vice-President of Paraguay, Mr Amancio Oscar Denis and Acting Foreign Minister, Mr Antonio Rivas Palacios, provided an opportunity to discuss the many opportunities for investment in Paraguay. Mr Denis extended a warm welcome to the delegation and expressed his Government's gratitude for Australia's interest in Paraguay. He said that there is great potential for greater

cooperation between Paraguay and Australia. He emphasised Paraguay's abundance of clean energy, wealth of natural resources and hardworking and respectful people. He also emphasised the openness of Paraguay's economy and its interest in encouraging greater foreign direct investment as a means of boosting economic growth and supporting on-going social reform in Paraguay.



The delegation with the Vice-President of Paraguay, Mr Amancio Oscar Denis

2.11 On behalf of the delegation Ms Burke expressed the delegation's appreciation for this opportunity to meet with Mr Denis so close to the election. She said that this was an exciting time to be in Paraguay, not just because of the election, but also because of the tremendous optimism as a result of the incredible growth in the Paraguayan economy. She agreed that there are many opportunities for exchange between the two countries. She said that there is much that Australia can learn from Paraguay and much that it can offer Paraguay in the form of technical expertise and support. She said that the delegation was particularly impressed by its visit to Itaipu Dam. For Australia, which relies so heavily on coal generated electricity, it was encouraging to see a country producing an abundance of clean and efficient energy.

President of Chamber of Deputies – Mr Victor Bogado

2.12 The delegation was privileged to meet with the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr Victor Bogado, and members of Foreign Affairs and Equity, Gender and Social Development Committees. In welcoming the delegation and thanking them for their interest in Paraguay, Mr Bogado described Paraguay as Latin America's best hidden treasure and the heart of Latin America. He said that as such it must aim to beat very strongly, which he hoped it would be able to achieve through a peaceful and stable administration.

2.13 Responding on behalf of the delegation, Mr Secker said that the many things that Australia and Paraguay have in common, together with their shared commitment to free trade, provides a strong basis for continued cooperation. He noted that Paraguay has great potential and that with continued economic growth and continued improvements in governance it can look forward to a bright future.

2.14 Mr Bogado expressed his Parliament's appreciation that the Australian delegation had made the long journey to Paraguay. He said that in his experience parliamentary exchanges of this kind play a significant part in the establishment of strong trade relationships. Strong parliamentary relationships can open the way for mutual understanding and a level of dialogue between countries that can often succeed where more formal dialogues have not.

2.15 The Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Senator Miguel Carrizosa, said that on behalf of the Paraguayan Parliament he would like to make a commitment to ensure a channel for further parliamentary exchanges between Australia and Paraguay by establishing a Parliamentary Friendship Group. He hoped the Australian Parliament would do the same.

2.16 Ms Burke expressed the delegation's strong support for continued parliamentary exchange. She said that in recent history, Australia has worked hard within Asia to demonstrate that it is a good neighbour and to establish positive relationships. She said that Australia could not rest on its laurels and now needed to look further afield within the Pacific region to expand its relationships, not just in trade terms, but also in the exchange of skills and expertise. Ms Burke said that the delegation was impressed by the widespread notion that Paraguay's future lies in trade not aid. She said that Australian businesses have much to offer Paraguay, particularly in the mining sector, and that in turn Paraguay has much to offer Australian business.

2.17 Mr Bogado presented Ms Burke with a book which sets out his reflections on his time as Speaker. Mr Bogado was first elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 2003. Since then the Chamber has elected him as its President on five occasions.



The Speaker and Mr Victor Bogado, President of the Chamber of Deputies

Foreign Affairs and Economic and Integration Affairs

2.18 The delegation's meeting with Paraguay's Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Antonio Rivas Palacios, and Deputy Minister for Economic and Integration Affairs, Mr Manuel Caceres, facilitated discussion of Paraguay's attempt

to create trade alliances outside its region. One of the greatest difficulties facing a landlocked country like Paraguay is the high cost of transport. While 80 per cent of Paraguay's trade comes and goes via river, thus avoiding the costs of overland transport, events in 2012 where Paraguayan shipping containers exported through port facilities in Argentina were blocked for a month, identified the need to explore alternative options. Both ministers observed that Paraguay's current suspension from Mercosur had encouraged it to become more actively engaged outside the region. However, both stressed that membership of Mercosur offered significant advantages for a small country like Paraguay.

2.19 The delegation remarked that Australia and Paraguay have much in common. They share similar concerns about restrictions on trade and initiatives that seek to distort markets. Both countries have much to offer each other through cooperation on the Cairns Group and other multilateral fora and by exploring latent opportunities for investment and export. Ambassador Holmes encouraged Paraguay to consider participating in the annual business conference, Latin America Down Under and combining this with a study tour to examine sustainable mining and agriculture projects in Australia.



The delegation's meeting with Paraguay's Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Antonio Rivas Palacios, and Deputy Minister for Economic and Integration Affairs, Mr Manuel Caceres

Senate Committees

2.20 The delegation met with Senator Clarissa Marin, Chair of the Senate Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee, Senator Miguel Carrizosa, Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and members of both committees.

2.21 The discussion centred on the importance of parliamentary committees within parliament in examining policy and legislation. It was observed that committees are sometimes able to address complex issues in a bipartisan manner, often leading to changes in policy and legislation that cannot be achieved through debate in the chamber.

2.22 Senator Stephens said that the National Disability Insurance Scheme provided an example of this. The legislation had been introduced by the government with bipartisan support and will ensure lifelong care for those born with a disability or who have suffered a catastrophic incident. The delegation heard that Paraguayan law requires a minimum of 5 per cent of all positions in public institutions to be designated for people with disabilities and that a bill currently before the parliament seeks to extend this requirement to the private sector. In Paraguay as many as 12-15 per cent of the population have some form of disability and the number is growing due to many traffic accidents, particularly motorbike accidents. The parliament also supports NGOs to provide financial assistance to disabled people.

2.23 The meeting also discussed the Australian and Paraguayan economies and efforts to expand trade into new markets in the interests of ensuring continued growth and employment. It was agreed that parliamentary diplomacy had a significant role to play in this, often proving more successful than more formal diplomatic channels. All present at the meeting expressed support for strengthening the relationship between the two parliaments.



The delegation's meeting with members of the Senate Foreign Affairs and Equity, Gender and Social Development Committees

Former Mayor of Ciudad del Este – Mr Javier Zacarías Irún

2.24 Early in its visit to Paraguay, the delegation met with the former Mayor of Ciudad del Este, Mr Javier Zacarías Irún. Mr Zacarías is a senior figure in the Colorado party and, as the former Mayor of Ciudad del Este, was able to provide the delegation with an interesting perspective on the city and the forthcoming presidential and general elections.

2.25 Ciudad del Este is the second largest city in Paraguay and the capital of Alto Paraná, situated on the Parana River that forms the border between Paraguay and Brazil. The city's economy is based principally on retail, tourism and contraband trade of electronic goods and firearms. Mr Zacarías described Ciudad del Este as both

charming and peculiar. He said that the local administration was working hard to address some of the challenges facing the city.

2.26 He said that the key issues of concern during the general election were unemployment, health and education and problems with access to basic services such as electricity, food and water. He said that Paraguay needed a government that understands these concerns and is committed to creating an environment which attracts foreign investment.

2.27 Mr Zacarías said while Paraguay is a rich country, 20 per cent of its population is extremely poor. In his view, the solution to this lies in addressing long standing issues of land tenure and development in the agricultural sector. He said that the majority of small landholders lacked the equipment, money and markets to make the most of this resource. He said that if the government could address this it would transform Paraguay.

Development cooperation

2.28 Development cooperation plays a significant part in the developing relationship between Australia and Paraguay. While Paraguay is one of the fastest growing economies in South America, the benefits of this growth are not felt equally throughout the country. A large percentage of Paraguay's population, especially in rural areas, derives its living from agricultural activity, often on a subsistence basis and from the informal economy.

2.29 High poverty and inequality indexes pose significant development challenges for Paraguay. Poverty afflicts one in three Paraguayans, while extreme poverty afflicts one in five. However, in the last decade Paraguay has made significant steps in social reform, including free access to primary health care and basic education.

2.30 Australia is working in partnership with the Paraguay Government, non-government and multilateral organisations and other donors to support initiatives that address poverty and development challenges in the region, with a particular focus on rural development, natural resource governance, climate change and environmental sustainability, and human resource development.

2.31 The delegation received informative briefings from representatives of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The key priorities for both the World Bank and IDB in Paraguay are to strengthen governance and government institutions, creating firm foundations for sustainable growth and poverty reduction and improved living conditions for Paraguay's low-income population. Following these briefings, the delegation was privileged to meet with organisations involved in the delivery of three important development projects currently supported by Australia:

- A microfinance project delivered by Fundación Paraguaya;
- A human rights radio project delivered by Radio Viva; and
- The *Paraguay for all* social development project.

World Bank

2.32 The World Bank's Country Manager for Paraguay, Ms Rossana Polastri, provided an overview of projects funded through its Country Partnership Strategy aimed at addressing long-term developmental challenges in Paraguay relating to governance, poverty alleviation and sustainable growth. She emphasised that the allocation of funds to projects is undertaken in consultation with the Paraguayan Government.

2.33 With such a high dependence on agricultural exports and the attendant volatility that comes from fluctuations in commodity prices and weather cycles, a key area of activity for the World Bank is rural development. Under a strategy managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, the World Bank contributes to the provision of technical assistance to small farmers. While the ultimate goal is to enable smaller producers to manage risk more effectively, in the more immediate term, the World Bank is seeking to address organisational and coordination issues in the provision of assistance.

2.34 Ms Polastri explained that a related priority is the provision of infrastructure, training and capacity building to ensure institutions are keeping pace with economic growth. The World Bank is supporting a range of projects that it considers will: strengthen Paraguay's energy sector to increase the quantity and quality of the provision of domestic electricity services; increase the efficiency, coverage and sustainability of water supply and sanitation services throughout Paraguay; and contribute to improved governance, effectiveness and efficiency within Paraguay's public sector.

2.35 Ms Polastri said that learning how to manage risk and manage resources during times of growth is important for Paraguay as it is very difficult to try to address poverty rates and generate long term employment in a volatile environment.

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

2.36 The delegation met with Mr Masami Yamamori, IDB's Chief of Operations in Paraguay, who explained that the objective of the IDB's work in Paraguay is to collaborate with the country as it strives to overcome major development challenges, attain sustainable growth and reduce poverty. He said that in developing a strategy for Paraguay, IDB takes account of the work of other international cooperation agencies and seeks to facilitate the diversification of sources of funding.

2.37 IDB's action in Paraguay is concentrated in the public sector and includes a broad spectrum of sectors including infrastructure, social, healthcare and education as well as institution-strengthening, the financial sector and municipal and urban development. Mr Yamamori said that while IDB's major investments are currently in the public sector, there is scope for investment in private sector projects. He said that the strongest demand in this area is from within the agricultural sector and in cement production. The key challenge for Paraguay is to diversify its agricultural production as a means of managing volatility in the market.

2.38 Mr Yamamori explained the complexities of allocating resources to projects in Paraguay. Paraguay's transport and energy infrastructure requires significant

resource injections. The poor state of the current energy distribution network means that Paraguay is not optimising the clean energy generated by Itaipu Dam and this is in turn hampering its ability to attract business investment. However, he said the IDB had found that the careful allocation of smaller financial resources can have significant flow on effects, for example by addressing governance and management efficiency.

2.39 IDB also provides support for projects focussed on social inclusiveness, including housing projects. Mr Yamamori told the delegation that over 800,000 Paraguayan families lack adequate housing and that this number is growing by 15,000 every year. Low income families have almost no access to the financial products they need to improve their living conditions. Through an innovative partnership with local microfinance institution Vision Banco, IDB is supporting low-income families to access finance to repair, expand or improve their homes. They will also receive training in financial literacy to assist them to manage their financial responsibilities.

2.40 Mr Yamamori said that IDB encourages the involvement of countries like Australia in Paraguay. He pointed to Australia's partnership with IDB through a Trust Fund of AUD10 million to finance innovative poverty reduction projects in the region.

Fundación Paraguaya

2.41 Fundación Paraguaya (the Foundation) is a not for profit civil association that has pioneered the promotion of micro-entrepreneurs through loans and training in Paraguay. The Foundation was founded in 1985 by Mr Martin Burt, currently Presidential Chief-of-Staff, to address the challenge of bringing the benefits of economic development to rural areas in Paraguay. Its mission is to develop and implement practical, innovative and sustainable solutions which eliminate poverty and create decent living conditions for every family. The Foundation's work is based on the premise that improving the business skills of micro-entrepreneurs, will enable them to initiate their own businesses, with flow on benefits for their community.

2.42 The Foundation's Chief Operating Officer, Mr Luis Fernando Sanabria provided a comprehensive briefing on the Foundation's work in the areas of entrepreneurial education, self-sufficient schools and microfinance projects.

Self-sufficient agricultural schools

2.43 The Foundation's self-sufficient agricultural school project won the 2012 Nestlé Prize in Creating Shared Value. These schools, set up in poor rural areas of Paraguay, give students a platform to develop entrepreneurial and practical skills. The schools implement on-campus micro-businesses that teach teenagers the skills they need to find a job or set up their own businesses.

2.44 Each school, together with the Foundation, creates a 'teaching and production' business plan to define which small enterprises it will set up. These micro-businesses range from agricultural technical assistance, milk production, farming, organic gardening, hotel services, bee keeping and chicken and egg production. The enterprises also enable the schools to be self-sufficient by meeting a range of operational costs such as salaries, administration and school maintenance, limiting the need for government funding.

2.45 Mr Sanabria told the delegation that the self-sufficient agricultural schools are not about teaching students to grow but about teaching them how to make money from the produce they grow. This project has already reached more than 500 students in Paraguay. The Nestlé Prize will help to scale up the project with the funds being used to recreate the winning model in the Paraguayan city of San Pedro.

Women's Microfinance Project

2.46 The Foundation's microfinance project aims to provide training for 3,000 low income women on microfinance management and development. The project is jointly funded by AusAID and the IDB, who each contribute around USD700,000, with the Foundation contributing USD820,000. The delegation heard that the Foundation's work through microcredit and training demonstrates how fostering entrepreneurship in people with limited resources who are financially excluded can promote job creation, increase gender equity and augment family income.



The delegation at a training session on microfinance supported by Fundación Paraguaya

2.47 While the delegation had some concerns regarding the franchise model, it recognised that by working through women's groups the project is able to assist families and communities, not just individuals. The groups are formed on a voluntary basis and offer support, training advice and recreational activities. The Foundation provides small loans on the condition that the recipients participate in training and save ten per cent of the credit they receive. Mr Sanabria said that while initially participants find it difficult to contemplate meeting the saving requirement, ultimately they realise that it is achievable and in most cases they exceed the minimum requirement. In 2011 the Foundation worked with 54,000 families, of which 6400 were able to cross the poverty line by resolving key poverty indicators.

2.48 The Foundation is now trying to professionalise the approach and has engaged a consultant to undertake a market study to identify suitable micro-franchise opportunities. The goal is to identify micro-franchises with a social purpose as a means of increasing access to basic services for remote communities. The first

franchises will include first aid kits, school supplies and basic food baskets. One micro-franchise model already working offers eye tests and reading glasses. The delegation was privileged to visit two women's group to hear first-hand of the success of training projects and to witness a training session for the reading glasses micro-franchise.

Radio Viva Human Rights Project

2.49 Australia has contributed AUD80,000 to the Trinidad Association, an organisation that promotes human rights through radio, to support a project entitled: *Human Rights in Paraguay, 22 years later ...*. This project, delivered in partnership with Radio Viva, seeks to empower Paraguayan women by training women to work in radio and broadcast programs focussing on women's human rights. Radio is estimated to reach 90 per cent of Paraguay's rural population.

2.50 Radio Viva's Director, Mr Arturo Bregaglio, told the delegation that while Radio Viva had been aware of the potential for community radio to contribute to cultural change for some time, putting this into practice had not been without its challenges. In Latin America radio is dominated by light music and 'unremarkable commentary'. Radio Viva has been striving to include deeper content between the music addressing women's rights, children's rights, defence of the environment and the fight against corruption.



The Speaker and the Ambassador during a radio interview with Radio Viva Director, Mr Arturo Bregaglio

2.51 The delegation's meeting with Radio Viva underscored the significant impact even modest amounts of assistance can have. Through cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Radio Viva has been able to leverage Australia's financial support throughout the Paraguayan community. Representatives from the Ministry of Education explained Radio Viva's interest in promoting education on women's rights had coincided with the Ministry's interest in establishing a national human rights education plan. The Ministry found the proposal to disseminate human rights education over the airwaves very exciting. One of the key challenges was to ensure

that the approach to human rights was not abstract and conceptual, but based on live experience. This had been addressed through workshops with local teachers and social organisations. The project, commenced in April 2012 and due to conclude in September 2013, has proved very successful.

Paraguay for all

2.52 The delegation received a comprehensive briefing on the implementation of the social development project *Paraguay for all*. The Paraguayan Government is partnered in this project by Australia, Germany and Chile.¹ The delegation met with representatives from each of these partners

2.53 The aim of the program is to improve the coordination and effectiveness of critical social services in Paraguay. The delegation heard that inequalities persist despite Paraguay's sustained economic growth in recent years and significant investment in social policy.

2.54 The project objective is to improve the delivery of services (for example in housing and health) to poor communities through a more coordinated, cross-sector approach that includes the collaboration of public and private stakeholders and community participation. The project will contribute to strengthening co-ordination in the delivery of public services in Paraguay.

2.55 The project has developed and piloted a model for more coordinated planning, budgetary and delivery services in two communities: one rural remote community and one peri-urban community. As part of the project, a group of eight public servants participated in a study tour to Australia, visiting Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Toowoomba. The aim of the study tour was to highlight alternative models for capacity building at both the institutional and family level and for collaborative management of the delivery of community services by NGOs and local governments to take advantage of economies of scale.

2.56 This is a large scale project seeking to implement major reform in the delivery of services. The presentation highlighted for the delegation the need for careful monitoring and evaluation of such projects to ensure they are capable of delivering practical and cost effective outcomes that are appropriate for the cultural and environmental conditions.

Economic and trade overview – opportunities for Australian business

2.57 Paraguay's economy is small but open and highly dependent on foreign trade. Paraguay is predominantly an agricultural economy which makes it highly susceptible to climate and world price changes. The country's main export is soybeans (it is the world's fourth largest exporter and seventh-largest producer). Other main exports include clean electricity (from Itaipu dam), cereals, beef, timber, leather and apparel.

1 Australian joined the project in May 2011 with finance of AUD1.5m over a 24 month period. Following delays caused by the 2012 political changes in Paraguay, Australia has agreed to extend its support to the project until December 2013. Other contributors to the project are the Paraguayan Government (AUD3.3million); Germany (AUD736,000) and Chile (AUD307,000).

2.58 Paraguay's economic outlook is strongly influenced by the economic performance of its neighbours, particularly Brazil and Argentina. In recent years, Paraguay's economy has experienced high volatility, with wide variations in real GDP rates.² Foreign direct investment in Paraguay has increased substantially in recent years, resulting from investments from multinational firms in Paraguay and from the secondary effects of capital inflows into the region.

2.59 Australia's bilateral trade with Paraguay is small, largely reflecting one-off-deals rather than ongoing supply arrangements. In 2011-12, two way merchandise trade totalled A\$4.0 million, of which A\$3.8 million consisted of Australian exports of paper and paper products, pharmaceuticals and vehicle parts. Australian imports consisted of clothing, sugar, molasses and honey, vegetable oils and fats.

2.60 A consistent message throughout the delegation's visit was that Paraguay welcomes foreign investment and accords national treatment to foreign investors. The delegation noted that there may be openings for Australian export and investment opportunities in a number of areas. Paraguay's agricultural sector offers opportunities for agribusiness and Paraguay's mining industry remains relatively under developed. However, the recent discovery of one of the world's three largest deposits of ilmenite (a titanium ore) has the potential to greatly expand mining in the country and diversify its economy. Further investment in Paraguay's abundant hydroelectric resources, together with Rio Tinto's planned aluminium mine have the potential to make Paraguay one of the region's undisputed energy players.

Hydroelectricity - Itaipu Dam

2.61 A key focus of the delegation's visit to Paraguay was the opportunity to undertake a technical tour of the Itaipu Dam located on the Parana River which forms the border between Brazil and Paraguay. The dam, which Paraguay operates in partnership with Brazil, is one of the largest hydro-electric facilities in the world in terms of annual energy generation.³

2.62 Half of the dam's 20 generators are owned by Paraguay and the other half are owned by Brazil, supplying around 90 per cent of Paraguay's electricity and 19 per cent of Brazil's. As Paraguay's output far exceeds its current needs, the Paraguayan government sells the majority of its supply to Brazil, making hydro-electricity one of Paraguay's largest exports.

2.63 The 50 year treaty between Paraguay and Brazil, which expires in 2023, stipulates that each country had the right to 50 per cent of the plant's capacity but that each country must sell the energy it does not consume to the other. The Treaty has been a source of discontent in Paraguay, compounded by Paraguay's agreement in 1985 to Brazil's request to sell electricity at below market prices to help Brazil tackle

2 6.4 per cent in 2008, minus 4.0 percent in 2009, 13 percent in 2010, 4.3 per cent in 2011 and an estimated minus 1.5 per cent in 2012.

3 While the Three Gorges Dam in China has a generating capacity of 22,500 megawatts compared to 14,000 megawatts for the Itaipu Dam, the delegation heard that the Itaipu Dam generates a larger amount of electricity because of seasonal variations in water availability on the Yangtze River for a number of months during the year.

its economic crisis. In 2009 Brazil agreed to a revised price and allowed Paraguay to sell directly to Brazilian companies instead of through the Brazilian electricity monopoly.

2.64 The delegation heard that Paraguay's ability to capitalise on the potential of Itaipu Dam has been limited by underinvestment in electricity infrastructure. This has in turn hampered Paraguay's ability to create employment and attract foreign investment.



The delegation at Itaipu Dam

Reception for Paraguay Australia Chamber of Commerce

2.65 With the assistance of the Paraguay Australia Chamber of Commerce, the Speaker and HE Ambassador Patricia Holmes hosted a reception for NGOs and businesses. As the Ambassador noted in her welcoming address, the recently established Chamber of Commerce has proved to be a vibrant vehicle through which to enhance industrial, commercial and cultural links between Australia and Paraguay. Since its establishment in September 2012 the Chamber has already attracted 72 members.

2.66 Speaking on behalf of the delegation Ms Burke said that the delegation had been overwhelmed by the program that had been prepared for it and the warmth of the welcome and hospitality it had received throughout. She said that the reception provided an important opportunity for the delegation to mix informally and gain a closer understanding of the challenges and opportunities for greater cooperation between Australia and Paraguay. She said that the strong message from each of the delegation's meetings had been that there is an incredible desire and commitment to

progression. At the same time the delegation had observed a clear commitment to ensuring that Paraguay's growth and prosperity reaches all sectors of society. In this context she acknowledged the work of Mr Martin Burt, and others like him, in fostering sustainable development in civil society. Referring to the work of Fundación Paraguaya on microfinance she observed that development requires both business and trade. Development is about growth, development, jobs and trade and about learning that there is nothing wrong with making money.

2.67 In response, Mr Burt said that Paraguay was very pleased to welcome the delegation. He noted the strong collaboration between Paraguay and Australia in the Cairns Group and recognised the key role that Australia plays in a number of multilateral fora. He said that Paraguay wished to encourage Australian companies to come to Paraguay and take advantage of its open economy and its strong economic growth. He said that Paraguay has an abundance of untapped potential and presents so many opportunities, in business, tourism and civil society. Australian technology could help Paraguay to transform and diversify its industry.



Mr Martin Burt, Presidential Chief of Staff at the reception for the Paraguay Australia Chamber of Commerce hosted by the Speaker, Ms Anna Burke MP, and HE Patricia Holmes

Luncheon briefing with Rio Tinto and P&O Maritime

2.68 The delegation's meeting with Rio Tinto and P&O Maritime provided a welcome opportunity to speak candidly about the experiences of the two companies in doing business in Paraguay.

2.69 In December 2009, P&O Maritime Services, which is based in Melbourne and maintains operations in five Australian ports, completed the acquisition of 70 per cent of the shares in Dos Santos Group's Bulk Barging business, a river navigation business based in Asuncion. The business provides pusher tugs and bulk barges that operate on the Paraguay/Parana river waterway for the transport of grain and iron ore. The delegation heard that the acquisition was the culmination of lengthy discussion and negotiation and a full due diligence process.

2.70 Rio Tinto Alcan (RTA) is developing plans to construct a major aluminium smelter in Paraguay, taking advantage of Paraguay's hydroelectric power facilities. The project is estimated to be worth \$US3.5 billion. If the project proceeds, construction would commence in 2014.

2.71 While the project is supported by both major parties, it has been the subject of protest by civil society due to environmental and labour concerns. The Paraguayan government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with RTA in December 2012 for the development of an industrial park where the company plans to build the smelter. RTA advised the delegation that the development of the master plan for the park would include provision for evaluation of social and environmental impact to be carried out simultaneously and that the operations model for the park would include environmental operation standards, and fair labour, safety and health practices complying with labour, environmental and other laws.

2.72 Both companies stressed the central importance of building and managing relationships when seeking to do business in Latin America and the need to continuously provide clear and accurate information. RTA, in particular, recognises that effective communication is highly important in presenting an accurate picture of the impact of a development such as an aluminium smelter on the environment. RTA is also mindful that the size of its proposed investment is extremely large for a country like Paraguay that is not used to having such a large player with the potential to control and use a very large amount of power. This all required careful handling and patience.

Nuevo Australia

2.73 People-to-people exchanges between Australia and Paraguay have a long history dating back to the establishment of a new colony of Nuevo Australia in 1893 by William Lane. The settlement was intended as a socialist utopia and while the settlement eventually dissolved due to conflicts among the members of the movement, Nuevo Australia exists today and has a population of approximately 300 people.



The delegation and HE Ambassador Patricia Holmes with Nuevo Australia descendant Mr Rodrigo Wood

2.74 The delegation was very pleased to meet with descendants of the Nueva Australia colonists on 3 April 2013 to hear a little of their experience growing up in Paraguay and gain an understanding of how the colony was administered and the tensions that led to its demise. Each spoke enthusiastically about their ties to Australia and noted that a number of them now have children living and working in Australia. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Nuevo Australia descendants to bring to life a colourful period of Australia's history and for the delegation to provide clarification of Australia's migration policy.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

2.75 The delegation's visit to Paraguay has underscored the significant potential for closer cooperation between Australia and Paraguay. A number of sectors of Paraguay's economy that offer potential for significant growth are areas in which Australia has significant interest and technical expertise, including agribusiness, clean energy and mining.

2.76 The current climate of strong economic growth and a commitment to addressing fundamental issues in relation to infrastructure, governance and social services augurs well for greater Australian involvement in Paraguay. The delegation is proud that Australia has been able to work so productively with the Paraguayan government and civil society to assist with Paraguay's development. The delegation considers that strong parliament-to-parliament relationships have a part to play in strengthening the already positive relationship between Australia and Paraguay.

2.77 The delegation was also privileged to have numerous opportunities to gain valuable insights into Paraguay's history and culture and to speak frankly with a wide range of individuals and organisations engaged in civil society projects to assist with Paraguay's development. The delegation is proud of Australia's involvement in efforts to ensure greater equity and efficiency in the delivery of social services and to build social capacity.

2.78 The delegation appreciates the diverse and engaging program and warm hospitality provided for it in Paraguay and wishes to express its sincere thanks to all those who met with it. The delegation was very fortunate to meet with senior members of the Paraguay Parliament and receive informative briefings from government ministers and departmental staff. The delegation is mindful that its visit coincided with the lead-up to the general election in Paraguay and is doubly grateful to those who gave up their valuable time to attend meetings. A full list of meetings and those who attended is provided at Appendix 1 to this report.

2.79 The delegation also wishes to express its appreciation of the support it received from Australia's Ambassador to Argentina, HE Ms Patricia Holmes and Ms Lisa Davidson, Mr Fernando Perez Tain and Ms Magdalena Luppi, and other staff of Australia's Embassy in Buenos Aires. Their assistance in arranging the delegation's program, and in providing briefings, advice and practical assistance throughout the visit contributed significantly to the success of the delegation. They are to be commended for their work and careful attention to detail. The delegation would also like express its appreciation to Ms Sophie Davies, First Secretary (International

Development), AusAID, who accompanied the delegation at its meetings with civil society organisations, for her advice and assistance.

Appendix 1

Delegation program - attendance at the 128th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Quito, Ecuador and bilateral visit to Paraguay

128th IPU Assembly (Quito)

Thursday, 21 March 2013

Delegation's arrival in Quito

Friday, 22 March 2013

- Asia Pacific Group Meeting
- Meeting of Women Parliamentarians
- Joint Meeting of Standing Committees' Bureaux
- Meeting of Network of Advisers and Secretaries to delegations
- Inaugural Ceremony of the 128th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union followed by a dinner reception

Delegation joined by the Speaker, Ms Anna Burke MP, Senator Anne Ruston, Senator Ursula Stephens and Mr Harry Jenkins MP

Saturday, 23 March 2013

- 12+ Group Meeting
- Governing Council
- Second Standing Committee (Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade)
- Assembly: Election of President, General Debate, Selection of Emergency Item
- Third Standing Committee (Democracy and Human Rights)
- Drafting Committee of Second Standing Committee
- Meeting with Mr Anders B Johnsson, IPU Secretary-General to discuss formation of an International Whips Network (Mr Patrick Secker MP)
- Meeting between Ms Anna Burke MP and Speaker of Ugandan Parliament

Sunday, 24 March 2013

- Assembly: General Debate and debate on emergency item
- Bureau of Second Standing Committee
- Informal Meeting of Parliamentary Whips
- First Standing committee (Peace and International Security)
- Panel Discussion: Development in danger: Filling legislative gaps to combat tomorrow's natural disasters
- Bilateral meeting with Moroccan Delegation
- Bilateral meeting with Irish Delegation

Monday, 25 March 2013

- Panel discussion: The legalisation of drugs: Can it help curb organised crime?
- Drafting Committee: Third Standing Committee
- Open session of the Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians
- First Standing Committee: consideration of draft resolution in plenary
- Panel discussion: Addressing the rights of children with disabilities
- Second Standing Committee: adoption of draft resolution
- Bilateral meeting with New Zealand Delegation
- Reception for Pacific Parliaments hosted by Australia and New Zealand
- Meeting with Mr Anders B Johnsson to discuss Australia's role in supporting IPU parliamentary strengthening activities (Ms Anna Burke MP and Mr Harry Jenkins MP)

Tuesday, 26 March 2013

- First Standing Committee: finalisation of draft resolution
- Assembly: continuation and finalisation of General Debate
- Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs
- Third Standing Committee: adoption of draft resolution
- Workshop: Ensuring accountability for women's and children's health
- Governing Council
- First Standing Committee: adoption of draft resolution.
- Meeting between Ms Anna Burke MP and Speaker of Suriname Parliament
- Bilateral meeting with Chinese Delegation
- Closing Ceremony

Wednesday, 27 March 2013

- 12+ final meeting
- Governing Council: reports on activities of IPU committees and other bodies
- Workshop: towards a new vision for development: What place for governance
- Assembly: Closing Session, reports of committees and adoption of resolutions and decisions.
- Dinner meeting and embassy briefing hosted by HE Timothy Kane, Australian Ambassador to Chile

Thursday, 28 March 2013

- Visit to 'Seeds of Hope' Infant Centre in North-West Quito to inspect Direct Aid Program project of the Australian Embassy in Santiago, Chile

Attendees:

Mr Marco Muñoz, Director, Childhood Services, Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion

Mr Alois Arnold, Executive Director, Association of Solidarity and Action

Ms Ana Cevallos, Education Director, Association of Solidarity and Action

Mr Gabriel Taipe, President, Families Association, Buen Vivir Seeds of Hope Infant Centre

Ms Amparito Espinoza, Buen Vivir Seeds of Hope Infant Centre

- Tour of Old City

Friday 29 March 2013

Depart Quito, Ecuador for Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil

Senator Ruston and Mr Jenkins depart for Australia and study visit to Santiago, Chile, respectively.

Visit to Paraguay - Program

Saturday, 30 March 2013 - Foz do Iguacu, Brazil

- Visit to Iguacu National Park
- Visit to Parque das Aves Centre for Nature Conservation

Monday 1 April 2013 - Ciudad del Este, Paraguay

- Technical visit to Itaipú Hydroelectric dam
- Meeting with Mr Javier Zacarías Irún, former Mayor of Ciudad del Este
- Depart Ciudad del Este for Asunción

Tuesday 2 April 2013 - Asuncion, Paraguay

- Briefing with World Bank

Attendees:

Ms Rossana Polastri, Country Manager for Paraguay

Ms Jazmin Gustale Gill, Economist

Mr Guillermo Cabral, Economist

- Briefing with Mr Masami Yamamori, Operations Lead Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank
- Briefing with Fundación Paraguaya NGO and site visits to two women's committees on training in microfinance

Attendees:

Fundayción Paraguaya: Mr Luis Fernando Sanabria, (Chief Operating Officer), Mr Roberto Giménez (Manager of Strategic Buisness), Mr Omar Sanabria Derbas (Manager of Microfinance), Ms Graciela Ávalos Lezcano (Self-sufficient Schools), Ms Lourdes Aguero (Manager of Special Projects) Ms Jimena Velljos (Administrative Assistant).

Inter-American Development Bank: Ms Mariana Wettstein (Specialist, Multilateral Investment Fund)

Wednesday 3 April 2013- Asuncion, Paraguay

Mr Adams departs for Australia

- Meeting with Minister Alberto Ramírez Zambonini, President, Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice

Other attendees:

Senator Alberto Grillon

Ms Liliana Benitez, General Director of Administration and Finance

Mr Carlos María Ljubetic, Advisor to President of the Tribunal

Mr Hugo Saguier Caballero, Advisor and Paraguay's former Ambassador to the Organisation of American States

Mr Luis Alberto Mauro, Advisor

Mr Jaime Bestard, Advisor

Mr Manuel Radice, Advisor

Ms Gabriela Sanabria, Director of International Relations and Protocol

- Meeting with Senator Miguel Carrizosa, Chair, Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, and Senator Clarissa Marín, Chair, Senate Equity, Gender and Social Development Committee

Other attendees:

Senator Alfredo Stroessner

Senator Amancio López

Senator Alberto Grillón

- Meeting with Mr Amancio Oscar Denis, Vice-President of Paraguay

Other attendees:

A/g Foreign Minister, Mr Antonio Rivas Palacios

- Briefing on Radio Viva human rights project followed by a radio interview with the Speaker and Ambassador

Attendees:

Mr Arturo Bregaglio, Director Radio Viva

Mr Oscar Boltes, Coordinator of Human Rights Project

Ms Josefina Ríos, Director of Administration

Mr Arnaldo Gutiérrez and Mr José Gallardo, formerly of Ministry of Education

- Meeting with descendants of Nuevo Australia

Attendees:

Mr and Mrs Rodrigo Wood

Mr Randy Wood

Miss Adriana Wood

Miss Melody Wood

Ms Diana Wood

Mrs Sylvia McLeod

Mr Ronald Birks

Mr Rodrigo Jacks

- Function hosted by Speaker and HE Ambassador Patricia Holmes

Attendees:

Mr Martin Burt, Presidential Chief of Staff

Mr Daniel Hidalgo Carrera, President Paraguay Australia Chamber of Commerce

Members of the Paraguay Australia Chamber of Commerce

Thursday 4 April 2013- Asuncion, Paraguay

- Meeting with Mr Antonio Rivas Palacios, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr Manuel Cáceres, Deputy Minister for Economic and Integration Affairs.
- Tour of the Chamber of Deputies
- Meeting with Mr Victor Bogado, President of the Chamber of Deputies and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Other attendees:

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and members of the committee, Ms Aída Robles and Ms Elva Martínez

- Lunch briefing with representatives from Rio Tinto Alcan and P&O Maritime hosted by HE Patricia Holmes

Attendees:

Mr Patrick Tobin, Director of Commerce and External Relations, Rio Tinto Alcan

Mr Simon Stella, South America Regional Manager, P&O Maritime Services

Mr Ricardo Dos Santos, Director, P&O Maritime Services

Mr Juan Carlos Taboada, Manager Paraguay, P&O Maritime Services

- Briefing on 'Paraguay for All' development project

Attendees:

Mr Richard Kent, Minister of Planning

Mr Steve Fisher, Development Consultant

Representatives from the Secretaria Técnica de Planificación, Ministry of Planning

Representatives of AusAID's Chilean and German counterparts

Friday 5 April 2013- Asuncion, Paraguay

Depart Asunción for Australia

Appendix 2

Speech delivered by Ms Anna Burke MP, Speaker, Australian House of Representatives, at 128th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Quito, Ecuador

From unrelenting growth to purposeful development “Buen Vivir”: New approaches, new solutions

On behalf of the Australian delegation, I thank the President and deputies of the Parliament of Ecuador for the warm hospitality, and the arrangements that have been put in place for this important Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Purposeful development for the Australian Parliament involves reaching all sections of society.

Yet generally we find that growth and development leave some behind.

When this happens, citizens become disillusioned with democracy because they think the political process fails to respond to their needs.

We all know that women feel particularly marginalised as their voices often go unheard.

One of the IPU's key priorities is to ensure that women are represented in all economic, social and political institutions so their concerns make it onto the political and legislative agenda.

Take Australia and New Zealand out of the equation and women represent just 4% of the Pacific Islands Forum parliaments.

Further, the IPU's report on women elected to parliaments in 2012 notes that, over the last ten years, the Pacific is the only region in the world to have seen a reduction in the number of women elected.

So to change this we need a new approach and new solutions.

Hopefully as members of parliament we are more likely to know what our citizens need, rather than having this prescribed by outside sources.

So MP-to-MP engagement provides us with a lot of potential to confront challenges.

No single parliament is too small or too large to play a role.

And that by working together we can have a greater impact on development outcomes.

Mr President, I am pleased to report that Australia and Ecuador are working together to promote biodiversity and combat climate change in the Yasuni Initiative.

The Australian Government is funding scientists from the Australian National University to work with research teams in Ecuador on this important project.

Last year, the Australian Parliament decided it had something to contribute to a new gender equality initiative in the Pacific – Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development.

So we set up the Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships project to tackle the continuing under-representation of women in parliament and to put women’s priorities high up the agenda.

In February, we organised our first event: a forum in Sydney attended by women from 19 parliaments across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

This was a chance to come together, to forge friendships and for women parliamentarians to be clear about what practical support they need.

Many of us had never met before, but over the course of two days, we learned from some incredibly experienced and highly-qualified women parliamentarians.

These women showed us how committed they are to being in politics, and to making sure that their country’s development takes into account the needs and aspirations of girls and women.

The Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships Project is showing the world what can be done when we work together – not just with women, but with men, with civil society and with the international community.

It also shows what can be achieved when parliaments of different sizes, from different countries, and from different cultures work as partners.

We understand that changing the existing institutional and cultural barriers to women’s inclusion in politics will take more than just the work of women.

For this reason, the project will work with three distinct audiences:

- individual women MPs;
- the institution of parliament (which by definition includes male MPs);
- and parliamentary staff.

The project will build relationships building between women MPs in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

We’ve already made a start: contacts between Australian Senators and the three women Senators in Palau have now flourished into a mentoring relationship.

Parliamentary staff will be assisted with training and scholarships.

A new website has gone live to share information and research.

One of the features of the project is the ‘twinning’ of Pacific parliaments with sub-national Australian parliaments.

The one-on-one relationship between parliaments means that capacity building programs can be set up directly, and in response to immediate needs.

It’s a very flexible way of providing assistance.

Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships allows us to work together to strengthen parliaments and at the same time address common issues of interest.

It has been embraced by more than 20 Pacific region parliaments, and is being considered in other regions of the world.

We are also pleased that the IPU has agreed to become a Principal Partner of the program.

Ultimately, the Pacific region needs more women in parliament, and those parliaments need to be able to address issues like violence against women, and improving the education and economic empowerment of women and girls.

These issues aren’t just important to women. They are vital to the wider goals of development and democracy.

Women have to be legitimate players in all spheres of life: social, cultural, economic and political.

And they need to be able to do that in an environment that values their contribution and does not intimidate or harm them.

The Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships project provides an exciting new approach in reaching these objectives.

And it is an approach that can be applied to any other issue – such as climate change, biodiversity or the rights of indigenous people.

And it can be applied to any cultural or regional context.

For the Australian Parliament, that really is purposeful development.

Appendix 3

Meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

Introduction

1.1 Ms Claressa Surtees, Clerk Assistant (Committees), of the House of Representatives, attended the meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) held in conjunction with the deliberations of the 128th IPU Assembly in Quito, Ecuador. The meetings of the ASGP were held from 23 to 27 March 2013. Ms Surtees participated in the proceedings of the ASGP as the substitute of Mr Bernard Wright, Clerk of the House, and played a full role in relation to meetings, discussions and deliberations.

Relations between the ASGP and the IPU

1.2 Mr Martin Chungong, Deputy Secretary General of the IPU, attended a meeting, together with three other staff of the IPU Secretariat, and led debate on recent developments in the IPU, particularly in the area of promoting democracy. He spoke to the report IPU in 2012 and highlighted the efforts of the IPU in working with the ASGP in institution building. Mr Chungong noted also that the IPU was working more closely with the UN to engage stakeholders for the achievement of development goals in democracy and good governance.

1.3 Mr Andy Richardson, Information Specialist of the IPU Secretariat, promoted a new publication Social Media Guidelines for Parliaments, which is the culmination of a working group drawn from the IPU, the ASGP, the UN Global Centre for ICT in Parliament and the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments.

1.4 Ms Zeina Hilal, Project Officer, IPU Gender Partnership Programme, reported on the plan of action for the gender program and achievements against the 2011 road map. She foreshadowed an assessment toolkit being developed for launch in October.

1.5 Ms Norah Babic, Programme Officer of the IPU Secretariat, reported on the support being offered, together with the UNDP, to Myanmar since joining the IPU 12 months ago in Kampala. She mentioned the IPU mission to Myanmar last year and foreshadowed further development initiatives to be taking place during the 2012-2015 timeframe.

Consideration of parliamentary matters

General debates

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

- The rights of parliamentary committees to receive written and oral evidence relating to government business; and
- Standards of conduct for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff.

Communications

1.7 There were also presentations and discussions on specific parliamentary topics:

- The formation of the Dutch Cabinet: control and transparency;
- Is it possible for parliaments to have an efficient institutional communication policy;
- Civil servants in parliaments – balancing service and impartiality;
- ISO certification: in search of excellence in the service delivery by the administration of parliament;
- The necessary limits to transparency – the problems for parliaments of freedom of information legislation;
- Bilateral co-operation between parliaments in different continents: the case of East Timor;
- The 3rd Legislature of the Cambodian Senate: opportunities and challenges;
- Human resources in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies: The role of the legislative advice service; and
- Political impeachment procedure in the Parliament of Uruguay.

Informal discussions

1.8 Informal discussions again took place in groups to continue the experiment launched at the last session in Quebec, Canada. Members formed groups for discussions in English, French and Spanish for approximately 90 minutes and appointed rapporteurs for each group, who reported back to the plenary on two occasions about two separate matters:

- Is it desirable or possible to establish common professional norms or principles for different parliaments for the recruitment and career management of parliamentary staff?

This discussion built on the discussions at the previous session in Quebec on staff development and on contributions from members prior to this meeting on examples of practice from individual parliaments. Rapporteurs completed

their duties by working together with the Executive Committee of the ASGP at the end of the day's program and this group will liaise further to develop a set of internationally applicable guidelines for the recruitment and career management of parliamentary staff, for consideration at the session in Geneva in October 2013; and

- Relations between the parliamentary administration and the personal staff of parliamentarians.

Other presentations

1.9 There was also a presentation and discussion on the parliamentary system of Ecuador.

Administrative matters

New members

1.10 A number of new members were admitted to the ASGP, most were replacing existing members who had retired or moved to other employment. One new member was admitted from Costa Rica because that country joined the ASGP for the first time. In addition, one new associate member from the ECOWAS Parliament was admitted, replacing the existing member.

Elections for members of the Executive Committee

1.11 Nominations for the posts of two ordinary members of the Executive Committee were invited during the course of the meetings. As only two members nominated to the vacant posts, Dr Jose Pedro Montero, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Uruguay, and Mr Ayad Namik Majid, Secretary General of the Council of Representatives of Iraq, were elected to the Executive Committee.

Next meetings

1.12 A draft agenda for the next session, from 7 to 10 October 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland, was circulated. When further developed it is to be placed on the ASGP website.¹

1 <http://www.asgp.info/en/home>