

Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia



**Report of the Parliamentary Delegation
to the
112th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly
in Manila
(31 March-9 April 2005)
and a
Bilateral visit to the Solomon Islands
(11-15 April 2005)**

June 2005

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ISBN 0 642 71531 9

This report was printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra

PREFACE

Membership of the Delegation

Leader	Mrs Kay Hull, MP Member for Riverina New South Wales The Nationals
Deputy Leader	Mrs Julia Irwin, MP Member for Fowler New South Wales Australian Labor Party
Members	The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, MP Member for Mackellar New South Wales Liberal Party of Australia
	The Hon. Bob McMullan, MP Member for Fraser Australian Capital Territory Australian Labor Party
Other delegates (IPU only)	Senator Grant Chapman South Australia Liberal Party of Australia
	Senator Julian McGuaran Victoria The Nationals

The Delegation was accompanied by:

Mr Neil Bessell, Secretary to the Delegation, Department of the Senate

Dr Barbara Cooper, Adviser, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and

Mr Graham Hull and Mrs Sally Chapman (IPU only) and Mr Geoff Irwin.

Briefings and assistance

The delegation received a comprehensive and informative briefing from officers of DFAT, AusAID and the Parliamentary Library on its visit to the Solomon Islands.

In relation to the IPU, DFAT, Treasury and Health provided comments on the draft resolutions to be considered by the three IPU standing committees, and also suggested amendments to the resolution to be considered by the Second Committee. The delegation thanks Dr Barbara Cooper and her colleagues at DFAT and the other agencies for providing this useful advice. The delegation also recognises the advice and support of Dr Cooper during the Assembly in Manila.

The delegation also thanks Mr Stephen Dyer and Ms Brenda Herd, Parliamentary Relations Office, for their administrative support and assistance, the staff at Synergy Travel, Ms Alison Gray of Qantas, and Mrs Della McCay and Mr Tony Styles, Department of the Senate.

Chapter 1

Inter-Parliamentary Union

IPU Council and Assembly

1.1 The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organisation that brings together representatives of the Parliaments of sovereign states.

1.2 At its Assemblies, which are held twice a year, members of national delegations participate in the following:

- the Assembly itself, being a focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue on political, economic, social and cultural issues of international significance;
- the Inter-Parliamentary Council, comprising three delegates from each affiliated group; and
- specialist committees established by the IPU and specific meetings such as the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and the Committee on Middle East Questions.

1.3 A 15-member Executive Committee administers the Union and supervises its annual program and budget.

Geo-political meetings

1.4 The recently amended rules of the IPU specifically recognise the role and function of the geo-political groups. These groups are as follows: Africa, Arab, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia, Latin America and the Twelve Plus.

1.5 The Australian delegation participates in the meetings of the Twelve Plus Group (the geo-political group centred originally on European Union membership but now including several other countries) and also the Asia-Pacific Group. In accordance with the new rules, the Australian Group has resolved that it will seek election to any position in the IPU, including participation on drafting committees and specifically the Executive Committee of the IPU, under the auspices of the Asia-Pacific group.

1.6 Nevertheless, the delegation attends and participates actively in the work of the Twelve Plus Group.

1.7 The meetings of the Twelve Plus and Asia-Pacific foster multilateral contact and provide the delegation with an important opportunity to put its point of view in a relatively informal atmosphere, and to cement friendships with other countries.

Membership of the Union

1.8 The 141 members of the IPU are as follows:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

1.9 There are 7 associate members, namely, Andean Parliament, Central American Parliament, East African Legislative Assembly, European Parliament, Latin American Parliament, Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Delegation report

1.10 This report is based on the official *Results of the IPU Assembly in Manila* produced by the IPU Secretariat.

Acknowledgements

1.11 The delegation records its sincere appreciation of the staff at the Australian Embassy in the Philippines and, in particular, His Excellency Mr Tony Hely, and his wife for their warm welcome and generous hospitality and to Mr Andrei Seeto, Third Secretary, for his excellent organisational and administrative assistance.

Highlights of the work of the Australian Delegation at the IPU Assembly

Mrs Hull was elected to the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians.

Mrs Bishop addressed the Assembly on its General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world under the overall theme of *The impact of domestic and international policies on the situation of women*. The rules also allowed this debate to include matters relevant to the emergency agenda item and Mrs Bishop's contribution included comments on Australia's response to the Boxing Day 2004 Tsunami.

Mrs Irwin addressed the First Committee on Peace and International Security on:

The role of parliaments in the establishment and functioning of mechanisms to provide for the judgement and sentencing of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism, with a view to avoiding impunity.

Senator McGauran also addressed the First Committee.

Mr McMullan addressed the Second Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade on:

The role of parliaments in establishing innovative international financing and trading mechanisms to address the problem of debt and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mrs Hull addressed the Third Committee on Democracy and Human Rights on:

The role of parliaments in advocating and enforcing observance of human rights in the strategies for the prevention, management and treatment of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Mrs Bishop was elected to and participated in the work of the committee that drafted the final resolution on the emergency agenda item on:

Natural Disasters: The role of parliaments in prevention, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Mrs Hull, Mrs Irwin and Mrs Bishop participated in the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians.

Senator Chapman participated in the work of the IPU Foundation for Democracy

Delegates attended the panel discussion on Women and Children in conflict situations.

Delegates attended four meetings of the Twelve Plus Group.

Delegates attended the meeting of the Asia/Pacific Group.

Delegates met with the President of the Senate of the Philippines, Senator Franklin M Drilon and had informal discussions with parliamentarians from many countries.



Members of the Australian Delegation with the President of the Senate of the Philippines, Senator Franklin M Drilon, who was also elected President of the 112th Assembly.

Chapter 2

112th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Inaugural Ceremony

2.1 The 112th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union was inaugurated on 3 April 2005 at a ceremony in the Cultural Centre of the Philippines, in the presence of Her Excellency the President of the Republic of the Philippines, Ms. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

2.2 Inaugural addresses were delivered by Senator F.M. Drilon, President of the Senate of the Philippines, Mr. J. de Venecia Jr., Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, Mr. R. Orr, Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, and Mr. S. Páez, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The ceremony concluded with an address by the President of the Republic, who declared the 112th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union officially open.

Participation

2.3 Delegations of the parliaments of the following 116 countries took part in the work of the Assembly:

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zambia.

2.4 The following Associate Members also took part in the Assembly: the Andean Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly, the Latin American Parliament,

the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

2.5 Observers included representatives of:

- (i) Palestine;
- (ii) the United Nations system: United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD);
- (iii) International Organisation for Migration (IOM), League of Arab States;
- (iv) African Parliamentary Union (APU), Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU), Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), Indigenous Parliament of the Americas, Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community, Nordic Council, Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation, Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of Islamic Conference Members (PUOICM), South African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum;
- (v) International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and
- (vi) the Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

2.6 Of the total of 1,127 delegates who attended the Assembly, 614 were members of national parliaments. The parliamentarians included 32 presiding officers, 31 deputy presiding officers and 165 women parliamentarians, that is, 27 per cent.

Agenda

2.7 The agenda of the Assembly was as follows:

1. Election of President of the Assembly
2. Request for inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda
3. General debate
4. First committee agenda item
5. Second committee agenda item
6. Third committee agenda item
7. Amendments to the statutes and rules
8. Agenda of the 113th Assembly
9. Emergency agenda item

Agenda item 1: Meeting and election of President

2.8 The proceedings of the 112th IPU Assembly opened at the Philippines International Conference Centre in Manila on the morning of Monday, 4 April 2005, with the election by acclamation of Senator Franklin M. Drilon, President of the Senate of the Philippines, as President of the Assembly.

2.9 On the morning of the first day, during the General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world, the Assembly heard an address by Ms. C. Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, who highlighted the importance of cooperation with the IPU and the role of parliamentarians in the protection of children. She presented the handbook for parliamentarians entitled *Combating child trafficking, recalling their duties in the fields of legislative oversight and advocacy to prevent the abuse and exploitation of children*. At the end of her speech, the Presidents of the IPU and of the 112th Assembly paid tribute to her work at the head of UNICEF for the past 10 years.

2.10 In the afternoon, the Assembly was addressed by Mr. R. Orr, Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, who asked parliaments to support the reform of the United Nations proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General. He underlined that the United Nations and the IPU needed to work together on the provision of assistance in building democratic institutions. The reform package included a proposal for a democracy fund that would be made available to governments, parliaments and NGOs. He added that the United Nations would appreciate the IPU's assistance and expertise in revitalising and reforming the General Assembly.

2.11 At the morning session of Tuesday, 5 April, the Assembly was addressed by Mr. A.G. Romulo, Foreign Affairs Secretary of the Philippines, who recognised, as a former parliamentarian, the important role played by members of parliament in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. Parliamentarians brought a distinct perspective that was vital for building consensus and for shaping future development. He stressed that it was important to strengthen multilateralism, and that the IPU provided positive proof that multilateralism could work. The Government of the Philippines supported the proposal put forward by the United Nations Secretary-General to replace the United Nations Commission on Human Rights with a Council. Lastly, he called on the IPU to reaffirm its commitment to trade liberalisation and support for an equitable multilateral trade system in the framework of the WTO. He stressed that developing countries could only realise the benefits of globalisation in the WTO framework if all members implemented the commitments made in Doha.

Agenda item 2: Choice of an Emergency Agenda Item

2.12 Prior to the Assembly, several countries submitted proposals addressing aspects of the Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004.

2.13 At the beginning of the consideration of the item, the Assembly had before it a single consolidated request for the inclusion of an emergency item presented by the delegation of Japan on behalf of Algeria, Chile, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Sri Lanka and Turkey, with the support of the Asia-Pacific geopolitical group, under the title *Natural disasters: The role of parliaments in prevention, rehabilitation, reconstruction and the protection of vulnerable groups*. The proposal was adopted by unanimity and was added to the agenda as agenda item 8.

Agenda item 3: General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world

2.14 The General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world, under the overall theme of *The impact of domestic and international policies on the situation of women*, took place in the mornings and afternoons of 4, 5 and 7 April.

2.15 As the Assembly had agreed to include an emergency item onto the agenda, the general debate was broadened to include debate on natural disasters and tsunami. Mrs Bishop addressed the Assembly on domestic and international policies on women and also on Australia's response to the Boxing Day 2004 Tsunami. Mrs Bishop's speech to the Assembly appears at Appendix 1.

2.16 A total of 120 speakers from 111 delegations took part in the debate, which was chaired by the President of the Assembly. During the various sittings, the President invited the Vice-Presidents from the delegations of Fiji, India, Ireland, Jordan, South Africa and Uruguay to replace him in the chair.

Agenda item 4: First Standing Committee: Peace and International Security:

2.17 The First Committee considered the following matter:

The role of parliaments in the establishment and functioning of mechanisms to provide for the judgement and sentencing of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism, with a view to avoiding impunity

2.18 The Committee held three sittings on 4 and 6 April, with its President, Senator E. Menem (Argentina), in the chair. In addition to a report and draft resolution prepared by the co-Rapporteurs, Ms. H. Bouhired (Algeria) and Mr. J. Argüello (Argentina), the Committee had before it amendments and sub-amendments to the draft resolution submitted by the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, China, Cuba, Egypt, Gabon, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

2.19 As Ms. Bouhired was unable to attend the Manila Assembly, Mr. Argüello presented the report and draft resolution on behalf of both co-Rapporteurs. Mr. E. Kourula, Judge with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague,

participated as a special guest in the work of the Committee, making an introductory presentation and responding to questions from the floor.

2.20 A total of 63 speakers from 53 countries took the floor during the debate.

2.21 Mrs Irwin and Senator McGauran addressed the First Committee on its topic for debate and their speeches appear in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively.

2.22 Following the debate, the Standing Committee appointed a drafting committee composed of representatives from Benin, Chile, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Morocco, Russian Federation, Sudan, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Venezuela. Mr. Argüello and Judge Kourula were also invited to participate in the work of the drafting committee, as advisers.

2.23 The drafting committee met in the afternoon of 4 April. At the beginning of its work, it appointed Lord Morris of Aberavon (United Kingdom) as its president and Mr. J. Garcia Jarpa (Venezuela) as rapporteur. The committee examined 128 amendments and sub-amendments to the draft resolution, and adopted some 35 of them, fully or in part. A number of other amendments were accepted, if not in letter, then in spirit, as many were similar in content to those that were adopted. In the afternoon of 6 April, the Committee considered the consolidated draft. Several delegations took the floor to express support for the text or to further clarify one of its provisions. One delegation requested further amendments to the draft resolution, but they were not accepted by the broader membership. The draft resolution as a whole was subsequently adopted by consensus by the First Standing Committee.

2.24 In the afternoon of 8 April, the draft was submitted to the plenary sitting of the Assembly, which adopted it unanimously. As an explanation of vote, the representative from the Syrian Arab Republic took the floor to emphasise the need to convene an international conference with a mandate to define and look at the root causes of terrorism. Mr. E. Menem, President of the First Standing Committee at the 112th IPU Assembly, also took the floor, commending the joint effort that had led to a strong resolution, and calling once again upon Member Parliaments to reject bilateral agreements that would provide for immunity from investigation and prosecution, by the ICC or otherwise, for the nationals of any State.

2.25 The text of the final resolution appears at Appendix 4.

2.26 The Bureau of the First Standing Committee met on 6 April to examine nine proposals submitted by IPU Members for the subject item to be debated by the First Standing Committee at the 114th Assembly. The Bureau selected a subject item entitled:

The role of parliaments in strengthening the control of trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

2.27 This topic was subsequently endorsed by the Committee and the Assembly. Upon its recommendation, the Assembly also approved the nomination of Ms. R. Oniang'o (Kenya) and Mr. F. X. de Donnea (Belgium) as co-Rapporteurs.

Agenda item 5: Second Standing Committee: Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade:

2.28 The Second Committee considered the following matter:

The role of parliaments in establishing innovative international financing and trading mechanisms to address the problem of debt and achieve the Millennium Development Goals

2.29 The Committee held two sittings on 5 and 7 April, with its President, Mr. E. Gudfinnsson (Iceland), in the chair. In addition to a report and preliminary draft resolution prepared by the co-Rapporteurs, Mr. O. Martínez (Cuba) and Mr. R. del Picchia (France), the Committee had before it amendments and sub-amendments to the draft resolution submitted by the delegations of Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, Romania, Slovenia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Mr. J. Crombet Hernandez-Baquero (Cuba) presented the report and preliminary draft resolution on behalf of Mr. Martínez, who was unable to attend.

2.30 A total of 48 speakers from 47 countries and the World Bank took the floor during the debate.

2.31 Mr Bob McMullan addressed the Second Committee on its topic for debate and commended to the committee the amendments to the draft resolution submitted by the Australian group. Mr McMullan's speech is included in this report as Appendix 5.

2.32 Following the debate, the Standing Committee appointed a drafting committee composed of representatives from Belgium, Egypt, France, Guatemala, Japan, Kenya, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sweden and Uruguay.

2.33 The drafting committee met in the morning and afternoon of 6 April. At the beginning of its work, it appointed Ms. L. Rosales (Philippines) as its president and Mr. J. Lowenthal Foncea (Guatemala) as rapporteur. The committee examined 124 amendments and sub-amendments to the preliminary draft resolution and adopted some 40 of them, fully or in part.

2.34 In the morning of 7 April, the Committee considered the consolidated draft, having adopted two further amendments to it and having rejected one through a vote. The draft resolution as a whole was subsequently adopted by the Second Standing Committee by consensus.

2.35 In the afternoon of 8 April, the draft was submitted to the plenary sitting of the Assembly, which adopted it unanimously.

2.36 The text of the final resolution appears at Appendix 6.

2.37 The Bureau of the Second Standing Committee met on 6 April to examine 12 proposals submitted by IPU Members for the subject item to be debated by the Second

Standing Committee at the 114th Assembly. The Bureau selected a subject item entitled:

The role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment

2.38 This topic was subsequently endorsed by the Committee and the Assembly. Upon its recommendation, the Assembly also approved the nomination of Mr. S. Katoh (Japan) and Mr. J. Nonô (Brazil) as co-Rapporteurs.

Agenda item 6: Third Standing Committee: Democracy and Human Rights:

The Third Committee considered the following matter:

The role of parliaments in advocating and enforcing observance of human rights in the strategies for the prevention, management and treatment of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

2.39 The Committee held three sittings on 5, 6 and 7 April, with its President, Ms. R. Kadaga (Uganda), in the chair. The Committee had before it a report and a draft resolution drawn up by the co-Rapporteurs, Ms. C. Martinez (Philippines) and Mr. E. Tumwesigye (Uganda), along with amendments to the draft resolution proposed by the delegations of the following countries' parliaments: Algeria, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Morocco, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and Thailand.

2.40 The Committee also had before it amendments proposed by the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians. In all, 55 speakers took part in the debate.

2.41 Mrs Hull addressed the Third Committee on its topic of debate and her speech appears at Appendix 7.

2.42 After the debate, the Committee designated a drafting committee composed of representatives of the parliaments of the following countries: Belgium, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Russian Federation and Switzerland.

2.43 The drafting committee met on 6 April. It began its work by naming Mr. P. Günter (Switzerland) as its president and Ms. D.M. Sauri Riancho (Mexico) as its rapporteur. It considered in detail the draft resolution drawn up by the co-Rapporteurs and improved the text, incorporating some of the proposed amendments.

2.44 On 7 April, the Committee considered the consolidated text of the draft resolution, and adopted it unanimously. The delegation of Saudi Arabia, once the resolution had been adopted, made a comment concerning the protection of health professionals against HIV/AIDS.

2.45 In the afternoon of 8 April, the Assembly, meeting in plenary, adopted the resolution unanimously.

2.46 The text of the final resolution appears at Appendix 8.

2.47 The Bureau of the Third Standing Committee met on 6 April to examine a number of proposals submitted by IPU Members for the subject item to be debated by the Third Standing Committee at the 114th Assembly. The Bureau selected a subject item entitled:

How parliaments can and must promote effective ways of combating violence in all fields

2.48 This topic was endorsed by the Committee and the Assembly. Upon its recommendation, the Assembly also approved the nomination of Ms. M.A. Martínez García (Spain) and Ms. H. Lee (Republic of Korea) as co-Rapporteurs.

Agenda item 7: Amendments to the Statutes and Rules

2.49 Matters arising under this item were approved by the IPU Council (see Chapter 3).

Agenda item 8: Agenda for the 113th Assembly

2.50 Matters arising under this item were approved by the IPU Council (see Chapter 3).

Agenda item 8: Emergency Item

2.51 As indicated above, the Assembly agreed to include the following item on its agenda:

Natural disasters: The role of parliaments in prevention, rehabilitation, reconstruction and the protection of vulnerable groups

2.52 On Monday, 4 April, the Assembly decided to include the above topic on its agenda. It then decided to refer it to a drafting committee composed of representatives of the delegations of Algeria, Australia, Belarus, Chile, Denmark, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The drafting committee appointed Mr. D. Djoudi (Algeria) as its president and Mr. J. Jayawardena (Sri Lanka) as rapporteur. The drafting committee met on Tuesday and Wednesday, 5 and 6 April. It adopted a draft resolution by consensus.

2.53 Mrs Bishop represented Australia on the drafting committee and participated fully in its deliberations.

2.54 On Friday, 8 April, the draft resolution was adopted unanimously by the Assembly. The text of the final resolution appears at Appendix 9.

Chapter 3

176th Session of the Governing Council

Agenda

3.1 The Governing Council considered the following agenda items:

1. Membership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
2. Financial Results for 2004
3. Financial Situation
4. Pension Fund
5. Amendments to the Statutes and Rules
6. Cooperation with the United Nations System
7. Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments
8. Democracy and strengthening of parliaments
9. Recent Specialized Conferences and Meetings
10. Reports of Plenary Bodies and Specialised Committees
11. Future Inter-Parliamentary Meetings

Agenda item 1: Membership

3.2 At its first sitting on 4 April, the Governing Council approved a request for re-affiliation from the parliament of Georgia, bringing the total IPU membership to 141.

Agenda item 2: Financial Results for 2003

3.3 The Governing Council considered the Annual Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for 2004, in conjunction with the report of the External Auditor. The Financial Statements showed that the IPU had an operating surplus of CHF 189,138 in 2004, in addition to a sum of CHF 142,158 credited to the Working Capital Fund.

3.4 Ms. L. Lerksamran (Thailand) presented the report of the Internal Auditors on behalf of Mr. S. Vejjajiva (Thailand) and Mr. R. Verrier (Cuba). The Internal Auditors were satisfied with the financial performance of the IPU in 2004 and with the presentation of the Financial Statements, which had further improved over the previous year. The Internal Auditors echoed the concerns of the External Auditor about the investment returns of the Pension Fund for Members of Staff of the IPU, and the possibility of a future deficit in respect of the payments due to the 12 pensioners remaining in the staff Pension Fund after the transfer of the active staff to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.

3.5 On the recommendation of the Internal Auditors, the Governing Council approved the Financial Statements, approved the transfer of the operating surplus to the Working Capital Fund, and sanctioned the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU in 2004.

Agenda item 3: Financial Situation

3.6 The Governing Council was given an overview of the current financial situation of the IPU. Expenditures during the first two months of 2005 were under budget because of vacant staff positions. The payment of contributions was slightly ahead of the previous year. The Secretary General expected to end the year in a break-even position.

Agenda item 4: Pension fund

3.7 The Governing Council was briefed about developments in relation to staff pensions. All active staff members had become participants in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. The Pension Fund for Members of the Staff of the Inter-Parliamentary Union remained in existence only to pay the pensions of former staff members. The Governing Council was advised that the Executive Committee had agreed to give voting rights to the pensioner representative on the Management Board and to add a statement to the Fund Regulations affirming the commitment of the Union to honour its pension obligations and to find appropriate mechanisms to ensure that sufficient funds were made available for that purpose.

Agenda item 5: Amendments to the Statutes and Rules

3.8 The Governing Council gave its approval in principle to a new Rule in the Financial Regulations that would allow it to consider the cancellation of all or part of long-standing financial arrears that potential members may have inherited from former regimes. The proposal stressed that any such decision would only be made in special, extenuating circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis. The formal amendment would be presented to the Governing Council at its 177th session.

Agenda item 6: Cooperation with the United Nations System

3.9 The Governing Council noted that the IPU was engaged in an ever broader and more substantive programme of cooperation with the United Nations. At the request of the Executive Committee, the main components of the cooperation, as presented in the Annual Report of the Secretary General, were listed in a separate compilation of recent and current activities carried out by the IPU in cooperation with the United Nations system. They included projects and programmes conducted with UNDP, UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNV, UNHCR, UNITAR, OHCHR, UNICEF, CEDAW and CSW. The Council agreed that there was great potential for further developing such partnerships in the future.

3.10 During the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, resolution 59/19 was adopted by consensus (with the co-sponsorship of over 100

Member States). It urged stronger cooperation between the two organisations, welcomed the decision to convene the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments at United Nations Headquarters in September 2005, and acknowledged the fact that the IPU had taken the lead in consulting national parliaments on the most appropriate means of implementing the Cardoso Panel's recommendations on a more structured relationship between the United Nations and national parliaments. The resolution also acknowledged that the IPU would report back to the General Assembly on the results of that consultation process.

3.11 It was also noted that two annual parliamentary events – the Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations (held during the fall session of the General Assembly) and the Parliamentary Meeting, held in March during the annual session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) – were gradually establishing themselves as regular and meaningful features of the programme of work at the United Nations, receiving greater attention and interest from the broader United Nations community. Such work would be further consolidated in the years to come.

Agenda item 7: Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments

3.12 The Governing Council was informed of preparations for the Conference, scheduled to take place from 7 to 9 September 2005. Formal invitations had been sent to all Speakers. Substantive preparations for the Conference were being made by the Preparatory Committee set up by the governing bodies. The Committee had met twice in 2004 and would hold its third and final meeting in Libreville (Gabon) in May 2005.

3.13 In Libreville, the Committee would have four tasks. First, it would consider the draft declaration for the Conference prepared by the IPU Secretary General at its request. The opinions of the wider membership had been canvassed in the course of the 112th Assembly so that they could be taken into account by the Committee in preparing a final text. Secondly, at the request of the Preparatory Committee, the Secretariat had issued a questionnaire inviting Speakers to report on action taken to follow up on the Declaration adopted in 2000 at the first Conference. So far, 80 parliaments had responded. The Preparatory Committee would review the final draft of the report on Good practices for action taken by parliament to consolidate its involvement in international affairs, which reflected the responses received so far. Thirdly, the Preparatory Committee had requested the IPU to prepare a handbook setting out exemplary practices in parliament that were widely recognised as making a noteworthy contribution to democracy. A working group had prepared a first outline of the handbook, which the Preparatory Committee would discuss. Lastly, the Preparatory Committee would take stock of the deliberations conducted within parliaments on the question of parliaments' response to the recommendations of the Cardoso Panel.

Agenda item 8: Democracy and Strengthening Parliaments

3.14 The Governing Council received a report on recent significant developments in the IPU's democracy-related work. In the context of its Technical Cooperation Programme, the IPU was currently involved in providing assistance to the parliaments

of Albania, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Uruguay and Kosovo. Projects were being initiated for the future parliament of Afghanistan and for the Transitional National Assembly of Iraq. The bulk of those projects were carried out in cooperation with UNDP, which also provided the funding. Other donors included the European Commission and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

3.15 The IPU had also pursued work to develop guidelines for the delivery of technical assistance to parliaments in conflict situations, in cooperation with UNDP. The guidelines, to be endorsed at a conference in Brussels in 2006, would single out the challenges facing parliaments operating in conflict situations and identify ways to assist them in addressing those challenges.

3.16 In 2004, the IPU and UNITAR had initiated a project to strengthen parliaments' capacity in the field of environmental management and sustainable development. A series of regional and national seminars would be organised in response to the specific needs of parliaments. The first such seminar would take place in Paris on 22 and 23 April 2005.

3.17 In sum, in 2004, the IPU had received some CHF 3.2 million in new funding for activities to strengthen parliaments. That funding included some CHF 1.3 million provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in the context of an agreement concluded with the IPU in December 2004. Under that three-year agreement, the IPU would pursue its activities to strengthen parliaments, promote the participation of women in political life and strengthen parliaments' capacity to promote and protect human rights.

3.18 In the electoral field, the IPU had been involved in election-related activities in Palestine and Iraq. Although the IPU rarely observed elections, it had registered as an official observer for the out-of-country elections held for the Transitional National Assembly of Iraq. IPU observers were present in eight of the 14 countries which had been chosen for out-of-country polling on account of their sizeable expatriate Iraqi populations.

3.19 Ten years after publishing *Free and Fair Elections: International Law and Practice* and the corresponding Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, the IPU had embarked on a project to review the publication's validity and topicality. It would publish a new edition of the study, taking into account major developments in the electoral field, including the need for greater women's representation in political life and the use of electronic technology. Funding for that project was being provided by the Ford Foundation.

3.20 The IPU had launched a major democracy framework project, which would produce a manual on parliaments' contribution to democracy. The project would identify good parliamentary practices, including reforms that parliaments had undertaken or were undertaking to improve their functioning and thus contribute to democracy at the national and international levels.

3.21 Lastly, the Global Parliamentary Foundation for Democracy, established in 2003 in order to mobilise additional resources in support of the IPU's democracy-related work, was being registered under Swiss law and was expected to go into full operation in the near future. It was managed by a board, currently comprising eight members.

Agenda item 9: Recent Specialized Conferences and Meetings

3.22 The Governing Council took note of the results of the 2004 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, the Brussels Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, the Fourth Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, and the Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Agenda item 10: IPU reform

3.23 The report delivered to the Executive Committee by the external consultant on a strategy for the IPU to upgrade its public image did not go unnoticed at the 112th Assembly. By way of acknowledgement of its findings, the Governing Council endorsed the suggestion of the Executive Committee that the latter should continue its practice of monitoring the implementation of the reforms. The Council was informed of one practical facet of the reforms directly related to its overall communications strategy, the establishment of a new IPU Resource Centre. It noted that the purpose of the Centre was fourfold: to establish and reinforce the IPU as a global point of information on parliaments and democracy; to preserve and promote knowledge produced within the IPU; to support and develop the ability of the IPU Secretariat to carry out its activities; and to participate in and strengthen information networks on parliaments and democracy.

Agenda item 10 Reports of subsidiary bodies

3.24 At its sitting on 8 April, the Governing Council took note of the reports on the activities of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and its Coordinating Committee, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the Committee on Middle East Questions, the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus, the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, and the Gender Partnership Group.

Agenda item 11: Future Inter-Parliamentary Meetings

3.25 The Governing Council approved the dates for the 113th and 114th Assemblies, to be held respectively in Geneva and Nairobi. In addition to the meetings listed as previously approved, the Council approved a seminar on the impact of parliamentary action on indigenous peoples' rights, to be organised in partnership with OHCHR and to be held in Geneva from 25 to 27 July, a parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunis on 17 November, a meeting to finalise a humanitarian agreement and promote justice, reparation and truth in Colombia, to be hosted jointly by the International Federation of Ingrid Betancourt Committees, the International

Federation for Human Rights and the IPU, and to be held at a place and date to be determined, and a Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the World Conference of Women Parliamentarians for the protection of children and young persons, to be held in Geneva, also at a date to be determined.

Chapter 4

244th Session of the Executive Committee

Work of the Executive

4.1 The Executive Committee held its 244th session in Manila on 31 March, and 1, 2 and 7 April. The President of the IPU chaired the meetings. The following members and substitutes took part in the session: Mr. J. Jorge (Brazil), Ms. J. Fraser (Canada), Mr. Lü Congmin (China), Ms. K. Serrano Puig (Cuba), Ms. K. Komi (Finland), Mr. R. Salles (France), Ms. A. Vadai (Hungary), Mr. T. Kawara (Japan), Mr. F. Ole Kaparo (Kenya), Mr. H. Al-Hadi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Ms. R. Benmassaoud replacing Mr. A. Radi (Morocco), Ms. M. Mensah- Williams (Namibia), Ms. L. Lerksamran replacing Mr. S. Vejjajiva (Thailand), Mr. I. Ostash (Ukraine), and Mr. J. Austin (United Kingdom). Mr. O. Natchaba (Togo) was absent.

4.2 The Executive Committee discussed and made recommendations on agenda items to be addressed by the Governing Council.

4.3 The Committee also reviewed the situation of the transitional parliaments in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. It also noted that the new parliament of Somalia continued to meet in Nairobi. While it was unable to hold out prospects for affiliation while that parliament was not established on the territory of Somalia, it agreed that the IPU should use its good offices to assist the new parliament in establishing itself there.

4.4 The Committee heard a presentation by the external consultant engaged to prepare a proposal to review and upgrade the image of the Union. The Committee decided that it needed further time to consider the implications of the report and therefore included the item on its agenda for its next session, to be held in Geneva. It considered other aspects of the IPU reforms, noting that some were functioning better than others. It decided that the matter should therefore remain a subject of close attention on its regular agenda. It agreed moreover that the recurrent failure of some elected members of committees and other bodies to attend scheduled meetings warranted the establishment of a "scorecard" to keep track of such absences.

4.5 The Committee received a report on the progress of the working group on contributions, which had been enlarged to assure better representation, both geographically and economically. The group was discussing ways to develop a scale of contributions that was based upon the current United Nations scale of assessment and which reduced the minimum contribution without increasing the maximum. The group had accepted that a new scale would require higher contributions from some mid-sized Members, and radical adjustments to the contributions of Members whose countries had experienced significant economic growth or decline since 1991. The Committee approved the transfer of budget appropriations between headings in order to provide funds for the lease of expanded office accommodation in New York and for the purchase of additional office furniture, while staying within the total approved

budget. The Secretary General informed the Committee that he had appointed four new staff members: a Research and Database Officer in Geneva, and three additional temporary project staff in Abuja, for the IPU project in Nigeria.

Chapter 5

Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

Meeting and participation

5.1 The Tenth Meeting of Women Parliamentarians took place on 3 April 2005 and brought together 120 women parliamentarians from the following 79 countries:

Angola, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Inter-Parliamentary Union – 176th session of the Governing Council 13 Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zambia.

5.2 Mrs Hull, Mrs Bishop and Mrs Irwin attended the meeting of women parliamentarians.

5.3 The Meeting was opened by the President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, Ms. J. Fraser (Canada), and began its work by electing Ms. P. Cayetano (Philippines) as President. Ms. Cayetano's opening statement was followed by speeches by the President of the Philippine Senate and the President of the IPU. In the absence of the Committee's Rapporteur, Ms. H. Hakobyan (Armenia), Ms. Fraser presented a brief report on the work of the Coordinating Committee at its two previous sessions.

5.4 Mr. R. Salles (France) then presented his report on the work of the Gender Partnership Group. The Group's activities related to monitoring the participation of women at the IPU, examining the IPU budget from a gender perspective and monitoring the situation of parliaments that had no women members. Mr. Salles drew attention to the results of a very stimulating dialogue session with the delegation of Kuwait.

5.5 As in previous years, the Meeting contributed to the work of the Assembly. At the current session, it considered the item discussed by the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, entitled *The role of parliaments in advocating and enforcing observance of human rights in the strategies for the prevention, management and treatment of the HIV/AIDS pandemic*.

5.6 The Meeting divided into two discussion groups to debate sub-themes of the topic, with a view to drawing up gender-related proposals for amendments to the draft resolution of the Standing Committee. The Meeting appointed Ms. S. Moulengu-Mouelé (Gabon) and Ms. G. Gautier (France) as the discussion groups' rapporteurs. Their reports were then consolidated into proposed amendments, which were submitted to the Standing Committee. Many proposed amendments were taken on board by the drafting committee.

5.7 During the 112th Assembly, the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The very first Meeting of Women Parliamentarians to be officially organised within the IPU had taken place in April 1985, in Lomé (Togo) during the 73rd Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

5.8 The Meeting held a dialogue on domestic violence. The session was introduced by two panellists, Ms. M. Martínez García (Spain) and Ms. R. Guanzon, an attorney from the Philippines. Both men and women parliamentarians took part in a very lively debate, which provided valuable insight into the challenges faced in ensuring the elimination of that type of violence. The Meeting went on to discuss cooperation with the United Nations on gender issues. It focused on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing process. The Meeting was briefed on the results of the parliamentary event entitled Beyond Beijing: Towards gender equality in politics, organised by the IPU and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. It stressed the need for parliamentary follow-up to the results of the forty ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which had examined progress made since the Fourth World Conference on Women.

5.9 The Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians met on 3 and 7 April. The sitting of 3 April served to prepare the work of the Tenth Meeting of Women Parliamentarians. The sitting of 7 April addressed the work of women parliamentarians during the 112th Assembly and debated a future work plan. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the fact that gender issues had been high on the agenda of the 112th Assembly throughout the General Debate, which addressed the question of the impact of national and international policies on women's rights, and also in the three Standing Committees. The Committee agreed that the panel on Violence against women and children in armed conflict situations had been particularly successful, generating lively discussion and specific recommendations. It also agreed that it would discuss the item on Migration and development that was on the agenda of the 113th IPU Assembly, with a view to submitting amendments to the draft resolution to the relevant committee. Lastly, it began preparation for the next Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, to be held during the 114th IPU Assembly, in Nairobi, in 2006.

Election

5.10 Mrs Kay Hull was elected to the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians.

Chapter 6

Subsidiary committees and other activities

Introduction

6.1 In this chapter, the delegation reports on the work of subsidiary committees in the IPU and other activities programmed during the Assembly in Manila. These relate to:

- Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians;
- Committee on Middle East Questions;
- Group of facilitators for Cyprus;
- Committee to promote respect for international humanitarian law;
- Gender Partnership Group;
- Panel discussion on migration and development;
- Panel discussion on violence against women and children in conflict situations;
- Presentation of the handbook for parliamentarians - *Combating child trafficking*;
- Meeting with the President of the senate of the Philippines and President of the 112th Assembly, Senator Franklin M. Drilon.

Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

6.2 The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians held its 109th session from 3 to 7 April 2005. Ms. V. Nedvedova (Czech Republic) participated in her titular capacity, whereas Ms. S. Carstairs (Canada), Ms. M.J. Laloy (Belgium), Mr. F. Margaín Berlanga (Mexico) and Mr. M. Mottaki (Islamic Republic of Iran) participated in their capacity as substitute members.

6.3 The Committee conducted 17 hearings with delegations from countries where it had cases pending and with representatives of the sources. The Committee examined a total of 57 cases concerning 31 countries. Four cases were submitted for the first time. The Committee submitted 26 cases to the Governing Council.

6.4 In keeping with usual practice, the delegation includes, in full, the report of the committee as Appendix 8 and draws attention to the case of Mr Roy Bennett, MP from Zimbabwe, who was the subject of representations to members of the delegation from fellow parliamentarians in Australia.

Committee on Middle East Questions

6.5 The Committee on Middle East Questions met on 4 and 7 April, with Mr. F.M. Vallerstnes (Norway) in the chair. It was attended by the titular members, Mr. T. Hadjigeorgiou (Cyprus), Mr. S. Al-Alfi (Egypt), Ms. M. Bergé-Lavigne (France), Mr. F. Owusu-Adjapong (Ghana), and Mr. O. Bah (Guinea).

6.6 On the first day, the Committee heard the report of the President on his activities since its previous meeting, relating in particular to his mission to Palestine that coincided with the presidential elections held there in January 2005. The members agreed that prospects for peace in the region had considerably improved in recent months, although it was too early to talk of significant steps forward. The forthcoming legislative elections seemed to be working as a catalyst for change among entrenched power structures. The Committee expressed appreciation of the role being played by Egypt in the peace process. It also discussed the possibility of an IPU mission being sent to the region at the time of the Palestinian legislative elections of 17 July 2005. It urged the IPU to write to the parliaments of the Committee members to stress that it would be appropriate for the members to be included in observer delegations organised either by national parliaments or international organisations.

6.7 The Committee also held a hearing with representatives of the Knesset and the Palestinian National Council. The Knesset delegation said that peace was within reach, providing that the Palestinian side showed a readiness to compromise and cease the violence. It was necessary for steps to be taken by both parties. If there was no violence, it could be possible to proceed from the Israeli disengagement plan to fuller implementation of the road map. The Palestinian delegation emphasised the fact that Palestinian land was still being occupied. The Palestinians were willing to respect the ceasefire in the interests of a successful campaign period prior to the parliamentary elections in July. The delegation pointed out the difficulties of maintaining security in the Palestinian territories with a poorly equipped security force and with their police stations demolished. The latter part of the first meeting was attended by delegations from Jordan and Egypt. The delegation from Egypt expressed the need for moderation and compromise, and emphasised the importance of rebuilding confidence on both sides. The Jordanian delegation hoped that the IPU Committee could be more innovative in encouraging the peace camp in Israel. The delegation also urged the parliamentarians to step up their efforts to bring about implementation of the many United Nations and IPU resolutions concerning the Middle East, a point with which the Committee entirely concurred.

Group of Facilitators for Cyprus

6.8 At the invitation of Ms. J. Mackey (New Zealand) and Mr. F. Gutzwiller (Switzerland), a dialogue was arranged on 5 April 2005 between the delegates of the House of Representatives of Cyprus and representatives of the Turkish Cypriot political parties. It was the first time that both sides had met under the auspices of the Group of Facilitators for Inter-Parliamentary Union since the 107th Conference had been held in Marrakech in 2002.

6.9 The Group informed the IPU Governing Council that during the meeting both sides had declared their resolve to work together and continue their efforts to reach a viable and lasting political solution, based on the Annan Plan, that recognised a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with a single citizenship and a single international identity.

Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

6.10 The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law met on Wednesday, 6 April 2005, with Ms. R. Kadaga (Uganda) in the chair. Representatives of the African Parliamentary Union (APU), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) attended the meeting as observers.

6.11 The Committee discussed the results of the regional parliamentary Conference on Refugees in Africa - The challenges of protection and solutions - held in Cotonou (Benin) in June 2004. It welcomed the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the conference and stressed the need for follow-up, which would be ensured at the regional and national levels through the follow-up mechanism of the APU, with the support of the ICRC and UNHCR. Emphasis was also laid on the importance of engaging subregional parliamentary assemblies in Africa (including those of ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD) to ensure the efficient implementation of the Cotonou results. A booklet on the Conference was produced by UNHCR, and the APU would distribute it to its members.

6.12 The Committee members assessed the progress made in translating and disseminating the IPU/UNHCR handbook for parliamentarians on refugee protection. The handbook now exists in 34 languages. The Committee discussed the results of the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, held in Nairobi in December 2004, which assessed action taken since the Convention's entry into force. The First Review Conference had resulted in the adoption of a Declaration and a Plan of Action. The Committee invited the IPU Secretary General to send a letter to all IPU Members, calling on them to bring those documents to the attention of their parliaments and to ensure adequate national follow-up. The Committee was briefed on the follow-up to the ICRC Conference on The Missing, held in Geneva in 2003. The ICRC stressed the importance of ensuring substantial parliamentary action in relation to missing persons, and suggested that the IPU discuss the topic of missing persons at one of its future Assemblies. The Committee took note of the fact that the Swiss delegation would submit a proposal to debate such an item at the Geneva Assembly in 2006, and expressed its support for it. The Committee heard a briefing from UNHCR on the question of statelessness and citizenship. Despite the development of international law and practice relating to nationality, the international community continued to face numerous situations of statelessness. The IPU and UNHCR had agreed to co-operate on the production of a handbook for parliamentarians on statelessness and citizenship. The Committee reviewed and approved a draft outline of the handbook.

Gender Partnership Group

6.13 The Gender Partnership Group held its fifteenth session on 1 and 2 April 2005. Participants included Ms. J. Fraser (Canada), Ms. M. Mensah- Williams (Namibia), and Mr. R. Salles (France). Mr. T. Kawara (Japan) was unable to attend and was replaced for the second sitting by Mr. F. Ole Kaparo (Kenya). Mr. Salles acted as moderator. The Group studied the composition of delegations attending the 112th IPU Assembly and at previous IPU statutory meetings. Of the 614 delegates attending the 112th IPU Assembly, 165 were women or 26.9 per cent. In absolute terms, that was the largest number of women participants ever recorded. In terms of percentage, it was lower than at the previous Assembly, held in Geneva in 2004. On a general basis, it was noted that the percentage of women delegates to the second yearly Assemblies was higher than at the first yearly Assemblies. Of the 116 delegations attending the 112th Assembly, the vast majority (109) were composed of more than one delegate. Of those, just 12 were composed of men only, and none was composed solely of women. While still substantial, that number represented the lowest percentage ever of multi-member, all-male delegations attending an IPU Assembly that is 10.3 per cent.

6.14 Lastly, the Group noted that, in conformity with Articles 10.3 and 15.2(c) of the Statutes, five delegations were subject to sanctions at the Manila Assembly. The Group continued its discussion on the question of a gender-sensitive IPU budget. The Group welcomed the financial report's new format, which attempted to highlight in many areas the gender impact of certain expenditures. However, it recommended a more mainstream approach to the exercise. For the 2006 budget formulation, the Group drew up several recommendations and suggested that they be taken into account. The Group continued its debate on progress made in countries where parliaments did not include women, and on mechanisms for assisting those parliaments in any way possible if they so desired.

6.15 The Group and the Kuwaiti delegation held a very informative and constructive session of dialogue regarding progress made in the promotion of women's rights in that country. The Group took note of recent developments in Kuwait, and expressed its support for a bill currently under consideration at the Majles Al-Ummah which would grant women the right to vote and to stand for election at both the local and national levels. It strongly called for its adoption, and looked forward to pursuing the positive exchange between the IPU and the parliament of Kuwait.

Panel discussion on migration and development

6.16 A panel discussion was held on Tuesday, 5 April, on the subject of Migration and development. The panellists were Mr. J. Karlsson, Co-Chair of the Global Commission on International Migration and former Minister for Migration and Development of Sweden, and Mr. T. Achacoso, former Administrator of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. The panel was moderated by the President of the Second Standing Committee, Mr. E. Gudfinnsson. Mr. Karlsson broached the subject from the standpoint of the report that his Commission would shortly be submitting to the United Nations Secretary- General, while Mr. Achacoso

drew on his rich experience in the Philippines, a country in which – as he pointed out – many doctors are retraining as nurses in order to seek employment abroad. After hearing the opening presentations, the parliamentarians engaged in a lively discussion that was all the more compelling for the variety of standpoints expressed, not only from migrant sending and receiving countries, but also from countries of transit. The discussion also served as a valuable exchange of opinions in anticipation of the debate on migration to be held in the Second Standing Committee at the 113th Assembly.

Panel discussion on Violence against women and children in conflict situations

6.17 Conflict continued to be a major obstacle to the fulfilment of women's and children's rights. To respond to that problem, the IPU and UNICEF jointly organised a panel discussion on 6 April 2005 on violence against women and children in armed conflict situations. The debates were launched by members of parliament from Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Sweden, a representative of Amnesty International and a United Nations expert on child soldiers and on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. The panel was moderated by Ms. P. Cayetano (Philippines). The debates were very lively and rich, and provided many recommendations for parliamentary action.

Presentation of the handbook for parliamentarians - *Combating child trafficking*

6.18 The IPU and UNICEF presented a handbook for parliamentarians on child trafficking at a press conference attended by the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. C. Bellamy, the President of the 112th IPU Assembly, the IPU President, and the IPU Secretary General.

Meeting with the President of the Senate of the Philippines and President of the 112th Assembly, Senator Franklin M. Drilon.

6.19 The delegation was pleased to meet with Senator Drilon and to discuss issues relating to the IPU and the Asia/Pacific geopolitical group. These discussions included Australia's role in the Asia/Pacific group and its willingness to participate fully in the work of the group. Senator Drilon expressed his thanks to the delegation for supporting his candidature and election to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The meeting also discussed the international position of Burma and its forthcoming chairmanship of ASEAN.

6.20 In relation to bilateral issues, the delegation and the senator agreed that contacts between the two countries should be extended, particularly on the parliamentary and political levels.

Chapter 7

Bilateral visit to the Solomon Islands

Aims and Objectives

7.1 The aims and objectives of the bilateral visit to the Solomon Islands were as follows:

- Strengthen cooperation and understanding between the Australian and the Solomon Islands Parliaments.
- Review Australia's relations with the Solomon Islands and opportunities for enhanced bilateral relations.
- Review the challenges and opportunities for longer term reconstruction and development (including the economic significance and environmental impact of the exploitation of timber resources).
- Gain perspectives on the recent evolution and role of the Pacific Islands Forum and on regional cooperation in the South Pacific.
- Review recent developments and progress of RAMSI.
- Gain perspectives on responses to RAMSI within the Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands fact sheet

Capital: Honiara

Area: 28.9 thousand sq kms

Language: English

Population: 500 000

Head of state: H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor-General
His Excellency Nathaniel Waena

Head of Government: Hon. Sir Alan Kemakeza KBE MP

Background

7.2 The population of the Solomon Islands, estimated at 523,617 in 2004, is predominantly Melanesian (about 95 per cent) although there are smaller Polynesian, Micronesian, Chinese and European communities. English is the official language but Solomons Pijin is the lingua franca for the majority of people. There are over 60 distinct languages in the country, with numerous local dialects.

7.3 The islands' first contact with Europeans was in 1568, when the Spanish explorer Mendana visited the islands. Whaling boats and traders began to visit the archipelago during the nineteenth century, followed closely by missionaries. In the 1860s "blackbirding" began, with a large number of Solomon Islanders recruited, sometimes by force, to work on sugar plantations in Queensland and Fiji.

7.4 In 1893, the British Government established a protectorate over the eastern group of islands with Germany controlling most of the west. Following the Anglo-German agreement of 1899, the British protectorate was extended to all areas now part of the nation, while Buka and Bougainville became part of German New Guinea.

7.5 The Solomon Islands was the scene of some of the bloodiest land, sea and air battles of World War II from 1942 to 1945 and the capital moved from Tulagi (in the Florida Islands, Central Province) to Honiara (adjacent to the strategic Henderson Airfield on Guadalcanal Province) in 1944.

7.6 There were some indigenous demands for self-rule after World War II. Britain granted the Solomon Islands internal self-government in 1976, followed by independence on 7 July 1978. At independence, the Solomon Islands joined the Commonwealth with Queen Elizabeth II as its Head of State, represented by a Governor General. The unicameral national parliament comprises fifty members, elected for a four-year term under a "first past the post" voting system. The Prime Minister is elected by an absolute majority of members of parliament. Party structures are fluid. In addition to the national government, there are nine provincial assemblies, each led by a premier.

Recent history and the "tensions"

7.7 Ethnic tension escalated on Guadalcanal in December 1998, although tensions had ebbed and flowed for some years previously. These tensions arose between Guadalcanal people and settlers from other islands, particularly from Malaita, who were drawn to Honiara and its environs by economic opportunities.

7.8 The Solomon Islands Government, led by Prime Minister, Bart Ulufa'alu, and the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) faced serious challenges in dealing with growing tensions and by mid-1999 the Guadalcanal militants had taken control of the countryside around Honiara. The militants first called themselves the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA) but later adopted the name the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM). Up to 20,000 Malaitan settlers (many second-generation) fled into Honiara and were repatriated to Malaita by the Red Cross in 1999.

7.9 Violence increased in mid-1999 with the emergence of a Malaitan militant group, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), which undertook armed action on Guadalcanal. A state of emergency was declared on Guadalcanal in June 1999. The Commonwealth Special Envoy, Sir Sitiveni Rabuka, brokered the Honiara Peace Accord, signed by members of the National and Provincial Governments and the Opposition, but the Accord failed to resolve the conflict. Despite several subsequent efforts to negotiate a cease-fire, the conflict continued throughout 1999. A

Multinational Police Peace Monitoring group, sponsored by the Commonwealth with assistance from Australia and New Zealand, comprising police from Fiji and Vanuatu, arrived in Honiara in October 1999. Violent incidents and harassment continued to escalate.

7.10 On 5 June 2000, MEF militants, together with disaffected police officers ("the Joint Operations Force"), seized control of key installations in Honiara and took Prime Minister Ulufa'alu hostage, demanding his resignation. On 13 June 2000, Ulufa'alu submitted his resignation. At a meeting of Parliament on 30 June 2000, following intimidation of MPs and action to prevent attendance by some MPs supporting Ulufa'alu, Manasseh Sogavare (who had been Finance Minister in the Ulufa'alu government) was elected Prime Minister and formed a new government.

7.11 Following Sogavare's election, renewed efforts were made, assisted by Australia and New Zealand, to bring the militant groups to the negotiating table. Talks took place on board HMAS *Tobruk* in July 2000, concluding successfully with a ceasefire agreement on 3 August 2000. These talks provided the momentum leading to the peace talks at the RAAF base in Townsville, between 9 and 16 October 2000. The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) provided a framework for consolidating peace. It provided for a weapons and general amnesty, disarmament and demilitarisation, restructuring of the Royal Solomon Islands Police and the decommissioning of the "Joint Operations Force". It also provided for the compensation of individuals and proposed development of areas affected by the violence and displacement of people. An indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was charged with responsibility for implementing the peace, with the assistance of an International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT), established at the invitation of TPA signatories.

7.12 The December 2001 elections returned a government with a mandate to redress the country's severe decline. Donors, including Australia and New Zealand, provided substantial support to promote free and fair elections, particularly through support to the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission, to the RSIP, and through the provision of 90 international electoral observers from Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands Forum, Forum Islands countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the UN, the EU, UK, US, Japan and Taiwan. The elections proceeded peacefully and the large contingent of international observers concluded the elections were fair and reflected the will of the people of the Solomon Islands. About two-thirds of sitting members were defeated, including the majority of ministers of the outgoing Sogavare Government.

7.13 While party allegiances are fluid in the Solomon Islands, the final post-poll tally was Sir Allan Kemakeza's People's Alliance Party (PAP) 16 seats, Association of Independent Members of Parliament (AIM) 18 seats, and Ulufa'alu's Solomon Islands Alliance for Change Coalition (SIACC) 13 seats. Sogavare's People's Progressive Party (PPP) secured two seats and the Solomon Islands Labour Party won a seat.

7.14 Sir Allan Kemakeza was elected Prime Minister on 17 December 2001. His People's Alliance Party formed a 29 member coalition in the 50 seat parliament with the Association of Independent Members led by former Finance Minister Snyder Rini.

7.15 Prime Minister Kemakeza and his Cabinet made efforts in early 2002 to address law and order problems, to develop credible economic policies, and to include the wider community in discussions to address the major problems facing the Solomon Islands. Prime Minister Kemakeza recognised both the seriousness of the situation and that significant progress in addressing the law and order problems in the Solomon Islands was a prerequisite for social and economic recovery.

7.16 Following agreement by the Solomon Islands Government and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand that the IPMT had done all it could to assist the peace process, the IPMT departed the Solomon Islands on 25 June 2002. Australia continued to assist the Solomon Islands to address the law and order situation including through working with the government and Royal Solomon Islands Police Force on a Law and Justice Sector Program aimed at strengthening the police, prison and legal services, assisting the work of the National Peace Council, financial support for the UNDP project for the demobilization of special constables, and communications and logistics support for the police through the Defence Cooperation Program. The appointment of an expatriate police commissioner funded by the EU in late January 2003 was aimed at strengthening police leadership and providing impetus to rebuilding the police force.

7.17 However, the prevailing atmosphere of lawlessness, with frequent outbreaks of violence, widespread extortion, and compromised nature of the Royal Solomon Islands Police, whose senior officers maintained links with criminal gangs, were significant obstacles to recovery. From late 2002, the government's ongoing commitment to reform and fiscal discipline was increasingly undermined by extortion and other intimidation directed against the SI Government by criminal groups.

7.18 The assassination of the former police commissioner and National Peace Councillor, Sir Fred Soaki in Auki on 10 February 2003, and the two day closure of commercial banks in Honiara in late May, as a result of threats, underscored the serious state of lawlessness in the Solomon Islands.

7.19 In April 2003, Prime Minister Kemakeza wrote to the Australian Prime Minister, requesting Australian assistance. Following consultations between the governments of the Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand, a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Pacific Islands Forum took place in Sydney on 30 June 2003. At this meeting, the Solomon Islands Foreign Minister, the Hon. Laurie Chan, outlined in stark terms the challenges to government, security and the economy in his country, and made a formal request for help. Australia and New Zealand proposed a package of strengthened assistance to support the Solomon Islands Government under the Pacific Islands Forum Bitikawa Declaration, which ministers at the meeting unanimously endorsed. The package was debated in the Solomon Islands Parliament, and a motion supporting the Solomon Islands Government's request for assistance was passed unanimously. The then-Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Fiji, notified the United Nations Security Council on 22 July 2003, as required under Article 54 of the United Nations Charter, and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan commended the regional cooperation displayed. Commonwealth Secretary-General McKinnon expressed his support for the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands

(RAMSI) and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group welcomed RAMSI at its meeting in September 2003 in New York.

7.20 Following the formal request for assistance from the Solomon Islands Government, Australian and Pacific Islands' police, military and civilian personnel arrived in the Solomon Islands on 24 July 2003, as part of the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands

7.21 The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands is a partnership between the Government and people of the Solomon Islands and the contributing countries of the Pacific region. Eleven countries have contributed personnel to RAMSI namely, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

7.22 RAMSI's mandate has been entrusted to it by the sovereign Parliament of Solomon Islands. All members of the National Parliament voted in favour of inviting RAMSI to provide assistance to the Solomon Islands. The leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum also unanimously endorsed this mandate.

7.23 The mission has been in the Solomon Islands since July 2003. Much of RAMSI's early work focused on restoring security and law and order, and stabilising government finances. This work continues, but now, there is an increasing amount of work being undertaken in the other areas, such as restoring the working of government and promoting economic recovery.

7.24 The Office of the Special Coordinator (headed by Mr James Batley) is responsible for the overall coordination of RAMSI's work. The office liaises and consults closely with the Solomon Islands Government and with other parts of Solomon Islands society. RAMSI currently includes around 250 police officers (the Participating Police Force), 120 civilians and a contingent of military personnel. RAMSI personnel are working in every province in the Solomon Islands.

7.25 RAMSI does not control the government or make national decisions on behalf of the Solomon Islands. The Parliament, the government, constitutional office holders, and the public service all remain responsible for exercising their respective functions, and they remain accountable to the people of the Solomon Islands.

7.26 RAMSI is working in three main areas, namely:

- creating a safer Solomon Islands;
- helping government better serve the people; and
- creating a more prosperous Solomon Islands.

A Safer Solomon Islands

7.27 RAMSI, through the work of the PPF and in partnership with the Royal Solomon Islands Police is committed to restoring security, maintaining law and order,

re-building the RSIP, re-building the Prisons Service and improving Rove Prison to meet international standards. RAMSI has also strengthened the law and justice system, including through assistance to the Courts, Public Solicitor Office, Director of Public Prosecutions Office and Attorney General.

7.28 RAMSI's immediate task after arriving on 24 July 2003 was to restore law and order. This has been largely achieved and the Solomon Islands is now a much safer place to live in, work and visit.

7.29 Over 5,300 people have been arrested on more than 7,700 charges since RAMSI arrived, mostly as a result of joint RSIP/PPF operations and investigations.

7.30 Approximately 3,600 guns have been removed from the community, many of which were illegally held and illegally used by thugs and criminals to bully, intimidate and coerce, effectively holding the people of the Solomon Islands to ransom and forcing them to live in fear. Crime involving firearms has decreased considerably in the Solomon Islands.

7.31 Now, RAMSI is helping to re-build the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) and to strengthen the criminal justice system.

7.32 The PPF has established seventeen police posts in all provinces. Posts are located in Tulagi and Yandina (Central), Taro (Choiseul), Avu Avu, Isuna, Mbambanakira and Tetere (Guadalcanal), Buala (Isabel), Kira Kira (Makira), Ato'ifi, Auki and Malu'u (Malaita), Tinggoa (Rennel / Bellona), Lata (Temotu) and Gizo, Munda and Lofung (Western).

7.33 RAMSI is now focused on re-building the RSIP as a vital national institution. Corrupt and ill-disciplined officers have been removed. Over 130 former RSIP officers have been arrested on over 500 charges, for serious offences including corruption, murder, assault, intimidation and robbery. Three batches of new recruits have started training since July 2004 - these are the first new recruits to the RSIP for many years. These young men and women have come from all provinces in the country. After completing training at the RSIP Police Academy at Rove, the first group of new recruits graduated in November 2004 and have now commenced policing duties.

7.34 Since the beginning of 2005, the PPF are increasingly focusing on training, mentoring and advising the RSIP, to re-build it as an organisation that is more professional, better disciplined and more effective and capable of doing its job.

7.35 After a successful capacity building exercise with Australian navy personnel, the RSIP patrol boat *Auki* and its crew has resumed duty patrolling the Solomon Islands' exclusive economic zone.

7.36 All Solomon Islanders brought before the courts have the right to a fair and proper trial, and RAMSI is helping to ensure this is the case. No-one in the Solomon Islands is above the law and the courts are now in a better position to uphold the laws of the country. RAMSI is providing personnel, infrastructure and administrative

support to key justice agencies and the courts (High Court and Magistrate's Court), to ensure the Solomon Islands' justice system operates effectively, openly and fairly.

7.37 RAMSI has provided experts to work as the Solicitor General and as the Deputy Legal Draftsperson, providing legal advice to the Government and assisting to review and draft Solomon Islands' legislation.

7.38 An expatriate Public Solicitor and seven experienced expatriate lawyers are working in the Public Solicitor's Office alongside their Solomon Islands colleagues, providing free legal advice and representing those people charged with offences (including but not limited to criminal matters).

7.39 An expatriate Director of Public Prosecutions, five experienced expatriate prosecutors and several Police Prosecutions advisers are working in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and RSIP Prosecutions Branch respectively, to ensure Crown cases are prosecuted fairly and fully.

7.40 Two RAMSI-funded magistrates are currently assisting to ensure cases are heard in a timely manner, and RAMSI will shortly commence providing additional advisory assistance to support improved administration and case management at the Magistrate's Court and High Court.

7.41 RAMSI has refurbished the main court chamber and constructed three new courtrooms (two criminal and one civil) at the High Court. Some emergency refurbishment work has commenced at the Central Magistrate's Court, with more comprehensive upgrades planned.

7.42 Any person in the Solomon Islands, if found guilty of a crime and sentenced to spend time in prison, has the right to be treated appropriately. RAMSI is supporting the Solomon Islands Prison Service (SIPS) with prison personnel and specialist advisers, training, and improvements to infrastructure and equipment. To assist with the professional development of SIPS, RAMSI, in consultation with the Solomon Islands Government, has recruited international staff into several senior management roles, including the Commissioner of Prisons and General Manager, Rove Prison. Forty advisers and support staff are also working with local SIPS officers at Central Prison.

7.43 Extensive works to improve the security and conditions at Rove Prison are now close to completion. The prison provides appropriate accommodation and conditions for prisoners, in accordance with international standards. The Tetere prison farm has also been re-opened to provide for minimal security offenders. RAMSI is supporting SIPS to improve policies and procedures relating to juvenile offenders, prison operations and provincial prison refurbishment. A program of SIPS officer recruitment, training and professional development is also a strong focus of RAMSI's assistance to the prison service.

Helping Government better serve the people

7.44 RAMSI is assisting in re-building and reforming the public service, helping Ministries deliver services through better planning, budgeting and implementation, assisting the fight against corruption through the strengthening of accountability institutions, re-establishing a public service training institution, assisting electoral reform, improving the operation of Parliament and strengthening public awareness of how the government works and about the delivery of services

7.45 RAMSI is helping the Solomon Islands Government to improve the way it works and this will allow the government to better serve and provide for the people of the Solomon Islands, in all provinces, in all parts of the country, in both urban centres and rural communities.

7.46 RAMSI is helping the Cabinet, the Prime Minister's Office and the Parliament to improve communication across government and with the community and to improve coordination between different parts of government. It is also helping to strengthen decision-making processes, and the tools for effective and accountable decision-making. RAMSI is also working with the UN Development Programme to help strengthen parliamentary processes.

7.47 RAMSI is working closely with the public service to improve planning, strengthen management systems and develop a professional and committed public service workforce. One immediate priority has been to help the government to re-establish the Institute of Public Administration and Management to provide training for public servants across government. Another priority is to work with the government to improve processes for public service recruitment so that important posts are not left vacant and overall recruitment is faster and more effective.

7.48 RAMSI is also helping to strengthen the formal accountability institutions that serve as the people's watchdogs on government, ensuring that government and the public service are run fairly and openly and that the resources managed by government on behalf of the people of the Solomon Islands are used for the proper purposes and in the interests of the people. These institutions include the Ombudsman's Office, the Auditor General and the Leadership Code Commission.

7.49 RAMSI is supporting the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission to ensure that elections are well managed, free and fair. RAMSI will also support a major civic education campaign to increase awareness of government and electoral processes in the Solomon Islands and to ensure Solomon Islanders are aware of their rights, responsibilities and privileges when it comes to the time to elect municipal, provincial or national government representatives.

Creating a more prosperous Solomon Islands.

7.50 RAMSI provides assistance in stabilising government finances, improving revenue collection and control of spending, helping the government to start repaying its arrears and its debts, both domestic and international, encouraging economic

reform that improves business conditions and investment and creates jobs and income-earning opportunities.

7.51 RAMSI is working with the Solomon Islands Government to strengthen financial management systems and to find ways to provide greater opportunities for both large and small businesses including farmers in rural areas. It is anticipated that these activities will gradually lead to a more prosperous Solomon Islands and better incomes for people around the country.

7.52 RAMSI is providing about twenty advisers who work in partnership with their Solomon Islands colleagues in the Ministry of Finance, National Reform and Planning. Together, this team has played a significant role in re-building investor confidence and the economy in the Solomon Islands by:

- restoring stability to government finances;
- developing balanced national budgets;
- helping the Solomon Islands Government to better manage revenue and expenditure;
- negotiations to restructure loans to reduce the government's debt burden
- beginning debt repayments to local businesses
- ensuring that public servant salaries and contributions to the National Provident Fund are paid on time
- improving revenue collection through better compliance which resulted in a 40 per cent increase in revenue from 2003-2004
- assisting to reactivate key industries, especially in relation to Gold Ridge Mine and Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited (formally known as Solomon Islands Plantation Limited).

7.53 RAMSI considers that these efforts have already had a significant impact on business confidence and the economy and have contributed to the economic recovery being witnessed in Honiara and throughout the provinces.

7.54 RAMSI advisors, in conjunction with other government departments, are also helping to coordinate and drive economic reform in the country. These reforms will help to encourage investment through the removal of impediments by streamlining legislation, removing excessive or inappropriate regulation, finding ways to reduce the cost of doing business in the Solomon Islands, and looking at options to improve unreliable and expensive transport services, a major obstacle to economic activity throughout the Solomon Islands.

7.55 RAMSI is assisting with strengthening the Ministry of Finance, National Reform and Planning so that it is able to plan for economic growth and to effectively coordinate donors willing to assist in this area. With more people and businesses paying their taxes, duties, customs and licensing fees, the government is receiving more revenue, which should translate to the provision of better services to the people

of the Solomon Islands - better schools, doctors and supplies for hospitals, and the maintenance and repair of roads, wharves and bridges.

7.56 It is hoped that by assisting the government to strengthen its financial systems and stabilise the economy, local and overseas businesses will have greater confidence to invest in the Solomon Islands.

Timetable for capacity building

7.57 The RAMSI program is expected to be implemented over a lengthy period of time. It is recognised that RAMSI is not a 'quick-fix' to overcome the ills that have plagued the Solomon Islands but rather it is a long-term partnership with the Solomon Islands government to create an environment in which Solomon Islanders can rebuild their nation. RAMSI must also have a strong provincial focus as well as working at the national level and the effects of improved law and order, and of improved government finances, are already being felt in provincial areas. It is anticipated that in future, provincial level assistance will be an increasing feature of RAMSI's work.

Economic overview

7.58 The majority of the population is involved in subsistence/cash crop agriculture with less than a quarter of the population involved in any paid work. Exports remain commodities based and include timber, fish, cocoa and copra.

7.59 The Solomon Islands economy is estimated to have contracted by 14 per cent in 2000, almost 9 per cent in 2001 and a further 2.4 per cent in 2002, primarily as a result of the closure of most major industries after June 2000.

7.60 The Solomon Islands economy has started a strong recovery. This follows a severe economic contraction over the period of the ethnic tensions (1999-2001) and stagnation in 2002. The recovery is partly attributable to the increasing volume of log exports, and the recovery of prices of other commodities and partly attributable to the arrival of RAMSI, which has dramatically improved the outlook for the economy. Fiscal policy has improved significantly, with budget surpluses in 2003 and 2004 from higher revenue and better expenditure management

7.61 Confidence is beginning to return to the local economy due to the improvement in the security environment and the timely payment by Government for goods and services. Local business confidence is increasing. The Central Bank of the Solomon Islands estimated in its 2003 Annual Report that the economy had grown by 3.8 per cent in 2003, and the Governor of the Central Bank suggested in May 2004 that more recent figures indicated that growth might be as high as 5.8 per cent in real terms. The Government's 2005 budget estimates growth will be around 4.5 per cent but could be higher if a major project starts up (eg Gold Ridge or GPPOL).

7.62 The decline in GDP during the tensions coupled with high population growth rates (of over 3 per cent) resulted in a significant decline in per capita GDP from a high of almost US\$1000 in 1996 to around US\$660 in 2002. In its 2003 Annual Report, the Central Bank of the Solomon Islands estimated that it would take 10 years

of annual GDP growth of 10 per cent before Solomon Islanders would experience levels of income equivalent to those of the four years prior to 1999. The violence associated with the ethnic conflict caused extensive damage to personal property, transport and communication infrastructure, schools, water supply and sanitation systems, electricity supply, government buildings, and the health sector, all of which were already significantly debilitated due to years of institutional neglect, and forced the closure of both large and small businesses. Full recovery from this will take some years. Interest in the reopening of Gold Ridge mine and Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited is encouraging. The challenge for the Solomon Islands Government will be to ensure long-term and broad based economic growth.

7.63 Export earnings fell severely from 1999 to 2002 as a result of the steep declines in activity in the country's few major export sectors of fisheries, gold and plantation agriculture. This was compounded by falling commodities prices. Merchandise exports grew by almost 60 per cent in 2002 and in 2003 some key commodity prices firmed with growth in exports being driven by the agriculture (particularly copra and cocoa), forestry and fisheries sectors. Current export levels still, however, remain below 1999 levels and are overly reliant on unsustainable levels of logging which were three times above sustainable levels in 2003.

7.64 At the end of 2004, total government debt was SBD\$2.2 billion. This comprises around \$1.7 billion in official public sector debt and around \$500 million in other debts including informal debt obligations, contingent liabilities and guarantees. The Australian Government continued to service World Bank and Asian Development Bank loan repayments on behalf of the Solomon Islands until mid-2004. The Solomon Islands Government has subsequently taken over the management and servicing of these loans.

7.65 With inadequate controls to reduce the leakage of public funds, the Solomon Islands Government budget for 2002 was significantly overspent and this continued into 2003. With RAMSI assistance, the Solomon Islands Government has made significant gains in introducing budget discipline, controlling expenditure, enhancing revenue collection and meeting financial obligations. The Solomon Islands Government also produced realistic and credible 2004 and 2005 budgets.

7.66 Government domestic revenue in 2005 is estimated at SBD\$550 million, which is a 50 per cent increase on 2003 actual revenue due to increased tax compliance and a growing economy. Budgets are now fully financed albeit with some donor funding without recourse to additional borrowing and at least 15 per cent of revenue is allocated to debt service.

7.67 In addition to Australian assistance, New Zealand, the EU, Japan, Taiwan and the UK provide varying levels of assistance to the Solomon Islands across a range of sectors. The social instability and economic and financial mismanagement by successive Solomon Islands Governments between 1998 and 2001 led to a 70 per cent reduction in international assistance to the Solomon Islands over that period, from US\$75 million in 1998 to US\$28 million in 2001. Australia funded a Multi-Donor Economic Governance Mission of technical experts in late 2002 as a vehicle for

donors to further engage the government on economic reform. Australia also played a key role in bringing together donors and the Solomon Islands Government at the Development Partners meetings in November 2003 and November 2004.

Foreign Relations

7.68 The Solomon Islands is a member of several regional and international bodies, including the South Pacific Forum and Pacific Community, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the United Nations, the International Whaling Commission, the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and has formal diplomatic relations with a number of European, Asian and other Pacific Island countries. It is host to the Forum Fisheries Agency, based in Honiara. International agencies, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and ILO also have offices in Honiara.

7.69 Australia, Britain, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Taiwan and the European Commission all have diplomatic representatives in Honiara. The United States has a resident consular agent. The Solomon Islands has diplomatic missions in Canberra, Port Moresby, Brussels, Taipei and at the UN in New York.

Australia-Solomon Islands Relations

7.70 Australia enjoys a close relationship with the Solomon Islands. Shipping and air services connect the Solomon Islands with Australia and financial links are close with two Australian commercial banks (ANZ and Westpac) operating in the Solomon Islands. Several Australian legal and accounting firms are represented directly or in association with local firms. An estimated 600 Australians are resident in the Solomon Islands, mainly in Honiara. Many are engaged in small businesses and missionary work.

7.71 Two-way trade between Australia and the Solomon Islands fell from \$95 million in 1997 to \$54.5 million in 2004. During the same period, Australian exports to the Solomon Islands dropped from \$91 million to \$49 million. From 1997-2002 Solomon Islands exports to Australia fell from \$4 million to \$1.4 million, but rebounded in 2003 to \$4.9 million and was \$5.1 million in 2004.

7.72 The Australian Governor General visited in December 2004. The Australian Prime Minister visited in August 2003 and again in December 2003. Foreign Minister, Mr Downer, most recently visited the Solomon Islands in December 2004; Defence Minister, Senator Hill in July 2004; Justice and Customs Minister, Senator Ellison in December 2004 and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Billson in 2004, as part of a Parliamentary delegation which accompanied Mr Downer and Shadow Minister for Pacific Affairs, Mr Sercombe, visited in January 2005. The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade also visited the country in December 2003. The delegation notes that the Environment Minister, Senator Campbell recently visited the Islands in June 2005.

7.73 Recognising the challenges confronting the Solomon Islands, Australia's development cooperation program with the Solomon Islands increased over threefold

from 1998 to \$37 million in 2002. Ongoing Australian assistance has addressed critical areas such as strengthening the rule of law, improving economic management, supporting essential service delivery, with particular focus on improving health services, enhancing rural development including through forestry and land reform, building peace and promoting community development. Since July 2003, this assistance has been boosted further through the development cooperation component of RAMSI. The 2004-05 Australian Budget allocated over \$200 million in official development assistance (ODA) for Solomon Islands related activities to support the long-term tasks of comprehensive economic reform, rebuilding the machinery of government, enhancing the legal and judicial environment, and developing a capable national police force.

7.74 The development assistance component of RAMSI (an estimated \$66.7 million in 2004-05) has already seen the placement of expatriates in advisory and line positions in the justice sector and in key financial institutions. These officers are helping to stabilise the Solomon Islands budget, develop transparent and accountable public administration practices, strengthen the capacity of police and prison officers, and create opportunities for economic revitalisation.

7.75 Australia's efforts are designed to create an environment where Solomon Islanders can proceed with the running of their country in a sustainable way, without threat of extortion or intimidation. RAMSI represents a long-term commitment to improving stability and growth in the Solomon Islands.

Bi-lateral visit

The delegation arrived in Honiara on Monday 11 April 2005 and undertook a full and comprehensive schedule of meetings and visits. The delegation's itinerary appears at Appendix 10. Its meetings are reviewed in the following sections of this chapter.

Meeting with the Speaker of the Solomon Islands Parliament, Rt Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea, KBE, PC

7.76 The delegation was pleased to meet with the Speaker of the Parliament, Rt Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea, who extended a warm welcome and wished the delegation an informative and productive visit to his country.

7.77 The Speaker briefed the delegation on the political situation in the Solomon Islands, pointing out that members of Parliament are elected primarily on personalities rather than allegiance to a political party. He added that political parties were developing but they did not have an extensive administrative and structural base.

7.78 The Speaker suggested that the Parliament is likely to be dissolved in December 2005 and elections held in April 2006.

7.79 The delegation noted that, at the last election, two thirds of sitting members lost their seats. It seems that there may also be a high turnover of members in the forthcoming election.

7.80 The Speaker confirmed that, at the last election, there was a 60 to 70 per cent voter turnout and he anticipated that in the current atmosphere there may well be an even higher turnout.

7.81 Sir Peter briefed the delegation on the work of the Parliament, indicating that it must sit at least twice each year. In 2005 it is likely that the house will sit on three occasions. The Parliament has a committee system with five standing committees, including a Public Accounts Committee that reviews the Government's budget. The Speaker indicated his hope of enhancing and expanding the involvement of members in committee work.

7.82 The delegation noted that the position of Speaker is an appointed rather than an elected position in the Parliament and Sir Peter commented that this did provide a "neutral force" within the institution.

7.83 The Speaker advised that members of the Parliament had little parliamentary facilities and resources and very few members had electoral offices. The Parliament itself lacked facilities, particularly research and secretarial services. Sir Peter also indicated that the Parliament would benefit from an enhanced legal drafting capacity.

7.84 The delegation was interested to gauge the Speaker's views on RAMSI. Sir Peter responded to questions on this issue in unequivocal terms. He said that he did not know where his country would be without RAMSI. The Speaker commented: "Ninety-nine per cent of Solomon islanders want RAMSI and anyone who doesn't, has something to hide".

Tour of RAMSI base

7.85 The delegation travelled to the RAMSI base on the outskirts of Honiara and toured facilities at the base. The delegation met and had a briefing from RAMSI's Special Coordinator, Mr James Batley. The delegation was also briefed on specific aspects of RAMSI by Mr Paul Ash, RAMSI Deputy Special Coordinator, Ms Sandi Peisley, Commander, Participating Police Force and Major Darren Wright, Commander Joint Task Force. The delegation also took the opportunity to inspect medical facilities, as well as housing and catering facilities.

Meeting with the Hon. Augustine Taneko, MP, Minister for Police and National Security

7.86 The Police Minister welcomed the delegation and indicated in his opening remarks that RAMSI is a "partnership" and that it has had a significant impact on the restoration of law and order in the Solomon Islands. He emphasised that capacity building under RAMSI is "the beginning of a journey" and that already there have been significant achievements.

7.87 Minister Taneko advised the delegation that there are approximately 1060 police officers in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIP) spread over the nine provinces of the country.

7.88 During the tensions, the RSIP was discredited and there was "no trust in the police force". Now, with new recruitment and training procedures coupled with RAMSI capacity building programs, the morale, discipline and standing of the RSIP has increased significantly. The new RSIP is disciplined, has recruits including women from all provinces and is re-establishing trust with the people. The Minister added that this process will need at least another two years. The Minister advised that there is now a Professional Standards Unit and the RSIP has benefited from association with senior officers from the Australian School of Police Management.

7.89 The Minister predicted that, since RAMSI, crime in the Solomon Islands has decreased by over 70 per cent. Peace has been returned to the streets of Honiara and provincial centres but crimes such as burglary, drunk and disorderly and break and enter remain a problem. The Minister commented that these crimes were very much the result of dislocation in urban areas and unemployment.

7.90 The Minister commented that geographically the Solomon Islands is diverse and that national programs, services and resources, including those made available through RAMSI, need to be equitably distributed across the archipelago. He added that those Solomon Islanders who do not live in Honiara "get forgotten" and that the government needs to "plan expenditure" and "prioritise needs distribution" so that more people have access to services.

7.91 Having noted the Solomon Islanders love of sports, particularly soccer, the delegation suggested that the Minister might wish to assess the feasibility of introducing programs similar to the Police Citizen Youth Programs in Australia.

Parliamentary Round Table

7.92 The delegation met with the following members of the Solomon Islands Parliament:

Hon. Johnson Koli MP for East Guadalcanal
Hon. Frank Bollen Pule MP for Gela
Hon. Daniel E. Kwanairara MP for North Malaita
Hon. Fr. Edmond Rukale MP for North Guadalcanal
Hon. Daniel Bula MP for North Vella Lavella
Hon. Edward Huniehu MP for East Are'Are
Hon. Francis Billy Hilly MP for Ranonga/Simbo
Hon. Simeon Bouro MP for East Honiara
Hon. Bartholomew Ulufa'alu MP for Aoke/Langalanga
Hon. Gordon Darcy Lilo MP for Gizo/Kolombangara
Hon. Job Dudley Tausinga MP for North New Georgia
Hon. Y Sato MP for West Honiara

7.93 The delegation was pleased to meet with several MPs and, in particular, members of non-government parties, including two former Prime Ministers. The delegation took this opportunity to assess the progress of RAMSI as set out in its aims and objectives.

7.94 The MPs indicated that the whole country appreciates the presence of RAMSI but it "needs to be tidied up". Specifically, MPs expressed concerns that RAMSI was supposed to be a "partnership" but, as a sovereign nation, the Solomon Islands needed to give the mission its direction. According to some MPs, the recent review of RAMSI was "faulty" and did not take into account "our thinking". The government needed to take a leading role in how RAMSI is operating and is progressing rather than "saying yes to everything". MPs maintained that in some instances national sovereignty and the authority of the Parliament have been compromised by certain decisions.

7.95 On general parliamentary matters, the MPs expressed concerns about the resources, facilities and remuneration available to members of Parliament and the resources available to the Parliament itself, particularly its committees.

7.96 The fluid nature of Solomon Islands politics and its party system became obvious during the meeting when it was noted that a former member of the opposition had recently joined the government and had been appointed to a ministry.

Meeting with the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Hon. Sir Alan Kemakeza, KBE, MP

7.97 The Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to both sides of the Australian Parliament for its full support for the Solomon Islands during the tensions and its significant contribution and participation in RAMSI.

7.98 The Prime Minister advised that RAMSI "is going very well" and that the review following its first year of operation showed it has been a "success story" and he was certain that the forthcoming Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group review would find likewise. The Prime Minister emphasised that RAMSI was not undermining Solomon Islands' sovereignty. RAMSI was in the Solomon Islands as a result of an Act of the Solomon Islands' Parliament. RAMSI was not a "takeover" but rather was an effective partnership subject to formal consultations, as well as the Cabinet and Parliamentary processes.

7.99 The Prime Minister indicated that RAMSI's mandate is governed by a broad and general agreement and the details are a matter for RAMSI and the government of the Solomon Islands. RAMSI has given the Solomon Islands a new history and it must go forward. Sir Alan suggested that RAMSI must continue for the next five years and with its evolution it would be welcome for some time after that. The Prime Minister assured the delegation that Solomon Islands "wants RAMSI here for 10 to 20 years".



Members of the delegation and the Australian High Commissioner (Mr Patrick Cole) meeting with the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Hon. Sir Alan Kemakeza, KBE, MP

Informal Lunch on the Pacific Plan and regional issues

7.100 The delegation discussed the Pacific Plan and regional issues with the following leaders in government and the public service in the Solomon Islands:

Hon. Laurie Chan MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Toswell Kaua, Secretary to the Prime Minister

Dr Derrick Sikua, Permanent Secretary, Education

Mr George Hiele, Permanent Secretary, Police and National Security

Ms Ethel Sigimanu, Permanent Secretary, National Peace and Reconciliation

Ms Ruth Liloqua, Permanent Secretary, Home Affairs

Mr John Watson Wasi, Assistant Secretary, Foreign Affairs

Mr Ali Tuhanuku, UNDP

Mr Moses Tepai, Department of Planning

7.101 The Foreign Minister, the Hon. Laurie Chan opened what proved to be a valuable discussion on the Pacific Plan with the comment that the Plan is an ambitious and effective one that offers security, good governance, growth and sustainable development. In relation to RAMSI, the Foreign Minister commented that "RAMSI helped save our nation".

7.102 During the course of discussions, several topics were discussed including:

- national budgeting and multi-year forward budget estimates;
- debt that affects the Pacific region as well as Africa;
- sponsoring of tertiary students;
- developing the contribution of women to Solomon Islands' society;
- access to services in regional and remote areas; and
- universal free education at the primary level (grades 1-6) and the challenge for further and tertiary education.

Meeting with the Minister for Finance and Treasury, Hon. Peter Boyers, MP

7.103 The delegation was pleased to meet the Finance and Treasury Minister who it was agreed faces one of the most significant challenges in the Solomon Islands.

7.104 Mr Boyers was a New Zealander who became a citizen of the Solomon Islands and in response to the troubling times in the 1990s decided to enter politics. He indicated that RAMSI has replaced chaos – "vandalism and day light robbery" - with law and order. He rejected claims that the mission in any way compromised national or parliamentary authority. He indicated that RAMSI is supported by 99.9 per cent of the population. The Minister characterised RAMSI as a "guiding light" "saviour", and "divine intervention". He expressed the view that the Solomon Islands was like a traumatised child that will need support and guidance for at least another ten years.

7.105 The delegation questioned the Minister on the economic situation in the Solomon Islands. In response, he advised that in 2004 the government budget was in surplus and prospects for the current year were encouraging. He noted the assistance of Australian officials in relation to budget support and advised that there is now more controlled spending and revenue growth is increasing. He expressed the view that this is testimony to the success of the recovery. He noted however that the Solomon Islands is not servicing a majority of its debt obligations.

7.106 The delegation also questioned the Minister on the sustainability of the Solomon Islands because of its significant reliance on logging. In response, the Minister said that the government was well aware of the challenges facing the economy, given its dependence on logging. He stated that his own view is that the regulations relating to logging need to be changed on ensure proper re-forestation. He

added that given growth rates of trees it is possible to have a sustainable industry as long as "if you log you replant".

Meeting with Hon. Fred Fono MP, Minister for National Planning and Aid Coordination

7.107 The Minister told the delegation that RAMSI has brought back law and order following a disruptive period of ethnic troubles. He expressed the hope that reductions in Australia's military component in the Solomon Islands will be rechannelled into revitalising the private sector. This would result in significant benefits for Solomon Islanders as it would broaden and strengthen the economic base.

7.108 In response to a specific question on the challenges facing the Solomon Islands, the Minister advised that it was essential to work cooperatively with the provinces on national planning. An important element of this is the need to coordinate aid development and assistance across the nation as a whole. The Ministry is reviewing the National Economic Recovery Reform and Development Plan which sets out priority areas.

7.109 The Minister emphasised the need to restore social services to rural areas and to develop infrastructure on the national level. This will encourage equal opportunities and services across the archipelago and this in turn will reduce ethnic tensions.

7.110 The Minister discussed with the delegation the plans to reopen the Gold Ridge Mine and the benefits that would flow from its operations.

7.111 Another topic of discussion centred on the use of local companies to provide goods and services. The delegation noted that tenders for goods and services are called locally, but suppliers do face challenges such as security of supply and competitive pricing.

7.112 The delegation also discussed with the Minister the significant benefits that flow from micro-financing and in particular, the financing of businesses operated by women.

Meeting with members of the Opposition

7.113 The delegation had discussions with members of the opposition including Hon. Francis Billy Hilly MP, the Leader of the Opposition and Hon. Bart Ulufa'alu MP for Aoke Langa Langa (both of whom have previously been Prime Ministers of the Solomon Islands).

7.114 The members briefed the delegation on Parliamentary practices and procedures, including question time (similar to the House of Commons) and the legislative process.

7.115 The members indicated that facilities and resources in the Parliament, including research assistance, are limited. The members indicated that standing orders did allow for "flexible speaking arrangements" and that there were appropriate

opportunities to raise issues of concern. In relation to the legislative process, the opposition did not have adequate and timely access to bills. They recognised however that it is always politically sensitive to increase spending on Parliament and its agencies.

7.116 The delegation discussed with the members the role of Parliamentarians in the Solomon Islands. The members confirmed that MPs were expected to literally provide a variety of services, including paying for health and travel costs, supplying materials to medical centres and handing out money to those in need. These expectations are fuelled by an electoral system based on personalities and big promises that are difficult to deliver. The delegation concluded that this situation may well explain the large turnover of MPs at elections.

7.117 The members emphasised that there is a need to educate the electorate about the legitimate role and proper expectations of members of Parliament.

7.118 The delegation also raised with the members the SBD \$ 400 000 per annum rural development fund provided to each MP by way of a grant from the Taiwanese Government.

7.119 Finally, the MPs expressed concern that the "economic system is owned by foreigners" and that there needs to be a new "road map" whereby Solomon Islanders "own and control the economy".

Inspection of Kolombangara Forest Products Limited

7.120 The delegation travelled to the Western Province in the Solomon Islands and inspected the Kolombangara logging operation Kolombangara Forest Products Limited (KDPL) is a joint venture owned by the Commonwealth Development Commission and the Solomon Islands Government. AusAID, through ACIAR programs, provides advice on tree nutrition, as well as environmental and sustainable practices on the island.

7.121 The aim of the company is to develop a sustainable forest industry. KFPL has a specialised tree breeding program for its principal tree species *Gmelina arborea* and the program is one of the most advanced in the world. Breeding programs are also undertaken for teak and *Eucalyptus deglupta*.

7.122 The delegation noted that KFPL's environmental policy has been approved by the Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation. Land clearing is done by hand and without the use of fire. Trees are planted between 40 metre and 400 metre contours and river banks are left undisturbed.

7.123 The delegation had the pleasure of meeting several members of KFPL's staff involved in logging, pruning and plant propagation.

7.124 KFPL operates two townships on Kolombangara at Ringgi Cove and Poitete. Ringgi has a population of more than 2000 people all housed by KFPL including employees, teachers and police. The company also subsidises the school and clinical services.

7.125 The delegation was impressed with the emphasis the company places on training and safety of staff and workers. On several occasions, the comment was made that Ringgi is the only logging operation where hard hats are compulsory and "if you don't have your boots on you don't work".

Dinner at Gizo, including a Forestry presentation

7.126 Following its inspection of Kolombangara, the delegation travelled by boat to Gizo where it had the honour of dining with a number of dignitaries from the Western Province, including:

Hon. Peter Boyers, Minister for Finance and Treasury, MP for South New Georgia.

Hon. Clement Base, Premier of Western Province.

Mr Gideon Kadi, Commander of Western Province, Royal Solomon Islands Police.

Mr Bill Apusae, Chief Health Inspector, Western Province.

Ms Annie Homelo, CSP Coordinator.

Mr William Nuba, CSP Coordinator.

Mr William Zorivo, CSP Coordinator.

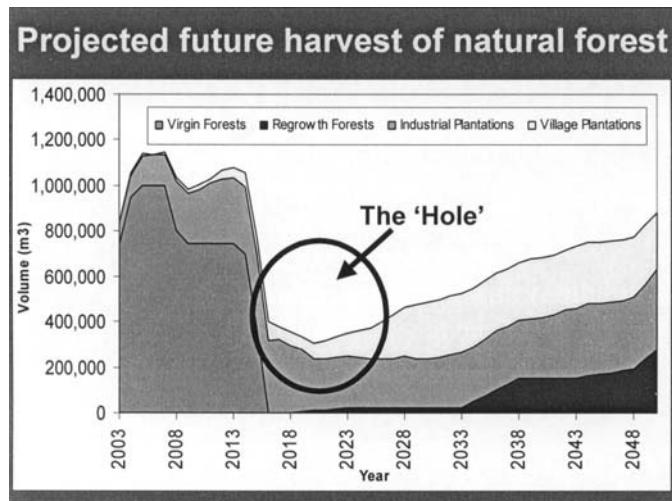
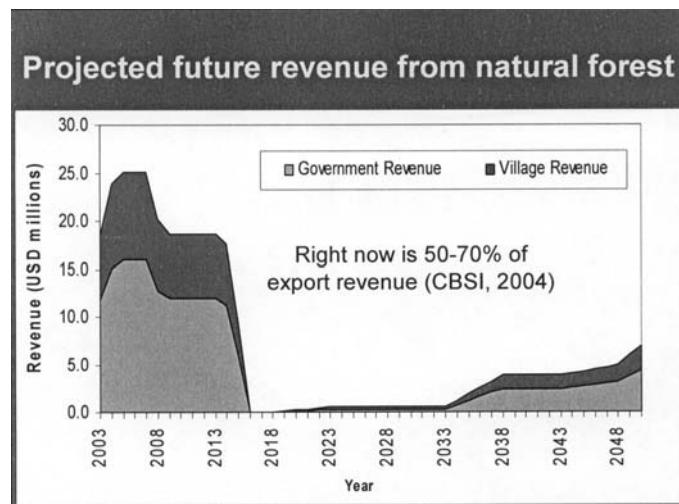
7.127 The delegation welcomed the opportunity to have informal discussions with provincial leaders and officials and this allowed them to gain a broader perspective on issues than that experienced in Honiara.

7.128 Following the dinner, the delegation heard an interesting presentation on Forest resources in the Solomon Islands from Mr Dan Raymond, Team Leader, AusAID Forestry Project.

7.129 Mr Raymond indicated that natural forests in the Solomon Islands provide wood for cooking, timber for domestic housing, habitats for wildlife and foods and medicines. Forests also provide over 50 per cent of total revenue for the Solomon Islands economy (approximately SBD 90 million if full revenue capture) in 2004. The industry employs about 4000 - 5000 people paying around SBD 40-50 million in wages per year and SBD 50 million royalties to traditional landowners.

7.130 Australia has had a continuing program of support to the forest sector in the Solomon Islands dating back to 1992 and this continues with the Forest Management Project 2004-08.

7.131 Mr Raymond's presentation highlighted the importance of forests to the Solomon Islands' economy but also raised the important issue of proper management and sustainability. Data shows that the volume of natural forest that is being cut (over 1 000 000 cubic metres in 2004) is more than double the sustainable yield. If this trend continues, the projected future harvests of natural forests will fall dramatically in 12 to 15 years time. This will result in dramatically reduced revenues from natural revenues, including government revenues. This in turn will present significant challenges for the government of the Solomon Islands. Mr Raymond's conclusions are clearly shown in the following graphs:



7.132 Mr Raymond considers that this problem can be addressed by the plantation option both by large scale private growers such as KFPL, but also small scale customary land reforestation. Mr Raymond predicts that one hectare of plantation is worth about SBD 500 000 if well managed over 30 years. An increase in overall sustainable wood flow will significantly increase royalties to traditional landowners as well as government revenue.

Informal lunch on parliamentary ethics and electoral reform

7.133 Several participants at the round table on ethics and electoral reform spoke strongly about the need to restore confidence in the Solomon Islands' Parliament and Parliamentarians. Trust and confidence had been eroded over recent years and it was imperative to put in place a code of ethics and a code of leadership. The round table recognised that these codes of ethics must be supported and insisted upon by all sectors of Solomon Islands society, including the church, civil society and business.

7.134 As it did at other meetings, members of the delegation raised the issues of the proper role and electoral expectations of MPs, emphasising that MPs in Australia facilitate access to programs and services but do not provide them as seems to be the expectation of the electorate in the Solomon Islands.

7.135 In response, one participant explained that the needs of Solomon Islanders are simple and basic and these to a large extent are not provided by the government. Hence MPs are expected to finance "medical treatment", "births", "nappies for children in hospitals" and even "funerals".

7.136 In relation to electoral reform, the round table was told that current voting procedures in the Solomon Islands allow voters to place their ballot paper in the ballot box in private. This procedure does not prevent a voter from removing the unmarked ballot paper from the polling station (having not placed it in the ballot box) and then "selling" it to the supporters of a candidate who would lodge the ballot in the ballot box afterwards.

7.137 The issue of registration of voters was also raised and members of the Australian delegation emphasised the importance of integrity of the electoral roll.

7.138 As in other meetings, the round table discussed the Rural Constituency Development Fund provided to MPs by way of grant from the Taiwanese Government.

Meeting with Women's Group in the Solomon Islands

7.139 The delegation was pleased to meet with members of the National Council of Women and other women's organisations and very much appreciated the traditional welcome and dancing.

7.140 The delegation participated in a lively discussion with the women including dialogue on the role of women in politics and, in particular, strategies and approaches that allow the voice of women to be heard more clearly in a male dominated society. The women at the meeting spoke frankly about the political, economic and social situation in the Solomon Islands and were unanimous in the view that the Rural Constituency Development Fund grants from the Taiwanese Government to members of the Solomon Islands' Parliament "must stop now".

Inspection of Gold Ridge Mine

7.141 The original development of the Gold Ridge Mine dates back to 1997 but ethnic tension closed the mine in 2000 and since that time ownership has changed on a number of occasions culminating in a successful bid by Australian Solomons Gold Pty Ltd (ASG) in 2004.

7.142 Members of the delegation inspected the mine, which is about an hours' drive from Honiara and saw, at first hand, the wanton vandalism and destruction that occurred during the troubles.

7.143 The prospective owners (since confirmed on 30 May) hope that reconstruction will commence in early 2006 and gold will be poured in September 2006. Projections are that the annual revenue will be in the order of \$A70 million and that there will be a work force of 400-500 with a multiplier effect of 4 to 5. ASG considers that the mine has excellent exploration potential and that Gold Ridge is a "beacon" for future investors in the Solomon Islands.

7.144 ASG advised the delegation that future success will depend on continued law and order, stable honest government and effective public service in the Solomon Islands. The Chief Operating Officer of ASG also advised that "RAMSI is doing a fantastic job – the continued support from the Australian Parliament for the Solomon Islands is greatly appreciated".

7.145 The delegation inspected several sites at the mine and noted how quickly the jungles of Guadalcanal have reclaimed much of the infrastructure.

7.146 The delegation was particularly interested in the mine's tailing dams and was advised that Gold Ridge is the first mine in the Pacific that contains tailings. The delegation was also advised that compliance with stringent environmental standards would be a condition of political risk insurance from the Australian Government. The delegation notes that, in the first instance, compliance will be actively monitored by the Australian High Commission. Other issues discussed included on-going negotiations with landowners.

7.147 The delegation was left with the impression that the success, or otherwise, of the project may well be a "litmus test" for much needed foreign investment in Solomon Islands.

Informal lunch with Ms Sue Ingram, Team Leader Machinery of Government Program

7.148 The delegation had an informative informal discussion with Ms Sue Ingram, Team Leader, Machinery of Government Program on the following topics:

- Good governance in the Solomon Islands;
- Scrutiny and accountability of the executive;
- Parliamentary committee system;

- Facilities and resources of the Solomon Islands Parliament;
- Training and development of public servants;
- The role and community expectations of Solomon Islands' parliamentarians; and
- The further role of Australian parliamentary officers and public servants, in assisting capacity building in the Solomon Islands.

Meeting with the Chief Justice of the High Court of the Solomon Islands, Sir Albert Palmer, KBE

7.149 The delegation was pleased to meet with the Chief Justice of the High Court of the Solomon Islands.

7.150 The Chief Justice advised the delegation that in relation to law and order "things are on track". The courts have dealt with high profile cases including the conviction for murder of Harold Keke. The courts will soon hear cases involving persons from the Malaita Eagles for offences allegedly committed during the tensions.

7.151 Sir Albert indicated that the building of additional courtrooms had gone well and the delegation took the opportunity to inspect these facilities. The Chief Justice also welcomed Australian assistance that has resulted in the strengthening of the offices of the Public Prosecutor and the Public Defender. The next focus will be on a central magistrate's court. The Chief Justice noted these improvements are welcome as they will assist to reduce long remand periods that are always a matter of concern.

7.152 During its visit, the delegation became aware of the significance and challenges posed by customary law and, in particular, its application to land rights. The delegation took the opportunity to discuss these matters with the Chief Justice who confirmed his interest in the issue and advised that proposals are being developed to establish a customary land court that respects the role of the chiefs and elders and at the same time gives certainty and confidence.

7.153 The Chief Justice also advised that there is a circuit of magistrates with cases listed in the provinces. The Judge expressed the view that this will allow "people to see justice being done" and that this will assist in "restoring confidence in the judicial system" and the rule of law.

Acknowledgements

7.154 The delegation records its appreciation of the Speaker of the Solomon Islands Parliament and the many Ministers and members who meet with the delegation during its visit.

7.155 The delegation is mindful that during its visit it had excellent access to many levels of government in the Solomon Islands including the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament, several ministers of state, and members of the opposition including two former Prime Minister, as well as heads of departments and chief advisers. The

delegation thanks the Australian High Commissioner H.E. Patrick Cole, Ms Anita Butler, Deputy High Commissioner, and all of the staff of the High Commission for their assistance. In this regard, the delegation is particularly grateful to Ms Nerida King for her tireless efforts in making the visit a success.

7.156 The delegation was also pleased to meet and hold discussions with Mr James Batley, the Special Coordinator of RAMSI and several of his team, who are doing an outstanding job in bringing peace, stability and capacity building to the Solomon Islands.

Conclusions and recommendations

7.157 There is no doubt that only a few years ago the Solomon Islands was a failing Pacific state with significant internal problems. Australia, along with other Pacific neighbours, responded to the request from the Parliament of the Solomon Islands for assistance. During its bilateral visit to the Islands the delegation received the clear and unequivocal message that RAMSI is much appreciated and is achieving significant outcomes. The delegation also noted the widespread view that RAMSI will need at least a further ten years to build capacity in parliamentary, public and other institutions. The delegation became aware of the commitment of many Solomon Islanders to the goal of nation building and the delegation sincerely hopes that these goals and aspirations are achieved for the benefit of all Solomon Islanders.

7.158 RAMSI and associated projects represent significant commitment on the part of Australia. In the circumstances the delegation considers that it is essential that the Parliament be kept informed on the progress of capacity building in the Solomon Islands.

Recommendation 1

7.159 The delegation recommends that the Department of Foreign Affairs should continue to provide detailed information in its annual report and that the Minister for Foreign Affairs should make an annual ministerial statement to the Parliament on the progress of RAMSI in the Solomon Islands.

7.160 The delegation was advised that the Parliament of the Solomon Islands may well be dissolved in late 2005 and elections called in April/May 2006. The delegation considers that these elections will be critical to the future of the Solomon Islands.

Recommendation 2

7.161 The delegation recommends that the Australian Parliament send a Parliamentary delegation to the Solomon Islands to monitor and report on this election.

7.162 The delegation became acutely aware of the limited resources available to parliamentarians and to the Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

Recommendation 3

7.163 The delegation recommends that the Presiding Officers write to the Speaker of the Solomon Island Parliament and draw to his attention to the parliamentary website of the Australian Parliament and, in particular, the Parliamentary library's databases, and to extend the assistance of the Parliamentary Library to the Solomon Islands parliamentarians to access papers, documents and other information.

Chapter 8

Meetings of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments

Geneva-September/October 2004

Manila-April 2005

Geneva-2004

8.1 Because of the 2004 general elections, Australia did not send a delegation to the IPU meetings in Geneva in September/October 2004. However, the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Mr Ian Harris, chaired all meetings of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliament (ASGP) and its Executive Committee from 28 September to 1 October 2004. The ASGP meetings were held in conjunction with the deliberations of the 111th Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Geneva organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Report to IPU Executive Committee

8.2 Mr Harris presented the annual report of the President of the ASGP to the IPU Executive Committee. The Executive Committee was complimentary of the moves that had been made to align the activities of the two associations, and the attempts to profit from the synergy between the two bodies.

Address by President of the IPU

8.3 One highlight of the ASGP meetings was the intervention by the President of the IPU, and ex officio chair of the IPU Executive Committee Mr S. Paéz (Chile). The agenda of future meetings will contain provision for an address by the President of the IPU.

8.4 Mr Martin Chungong, from the IPU secretariat, delivered the usual briefing to the meeting on current activities of the IPU. The session with Mr Chungong was, as usual, very much appreciated by members.

Consideration of Parliamentary matters

General debates

8.5 The general meetings of the ASGP continued the format of general, thematic debates. The two chosen subjects were

- Financial control in Parliament:

- The relationship between Parliament and the highest state financial bodies.
- Expertise in Parliament in relation to financial scrutiny of government expenditure
- The tension between the wish to deal as speedily as possible with the passing of Bills and the need to ensure that they are properly scrutinised.

8.6 There were also presentations and discussions on specific parliamentary topics.

Administrative matters

New members

8.7 A number of new members were admitted to the Association. Most were replacing existing members who had retired or moved to other employment. In addition, the Secretary-General of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Secretary-General of the House of Federation of Ethiopia joined the Association.

Financial matters

8.8 The meeting considered administrative and financial matters, and adopted the draft budget recommended by the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee matters

8.9 There was a vacancy in Executive Committee membership, held over from the meeting in Mexico City. Mrs Isabel CORTE-REAL, from Portugal, was elected to the vacant position.

8.10 The meeting also adopted a draft agenda for the next meeting in Manila. The Executive Committee agreed to finalise the draft agenda by electronic means before the Manila meeting. It now appears on the ASGP web site.

ASGP staff assistance in Geneva

8.11 Ms Claressa Surtees attended the meetings as a substitute for the Deputy Clerk of the House, Mr Bernard Wright. Ms Surtees made an intervention in the general debate on legislative urgency/appropriate consideration, drawing the attention of participants to the House of Representatives Main Committee.

8.12 The Executive Committees of the ASGP and the IPU endorsed a proposal to have staffing assistance available in Geneva to carry out ASGP work, and where possible and appropriate, to assist with IPU work. The first person to perform these duties, Mr Andres Lomp of the Department of the House of Representatives, joined the meetings after both Executive Committees had given their endorsement.

Manila-2005

8.13 Mr Harris chaired all meetings of the ASGP and its Executive Committee held in conjunction with the 112th Inter-Parliamentary Assembly held in Manila, The Philippines from 4 to 7 April 2005. Ms Surtees again attended as a substitute for the Deputy Clerk of the House. Ms Surtees led the discussion on the training of parliamentary staff, together with Mr Wayne Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council of Victoria, and formerly President of the Australia/New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table. Mr Tunnecliffe attended as an observer on the invitation of the Executive Committee. The second person to perform the duties of assistance to the ASGP (and occasionally the IPU), Ms Catherine Cornish, also attended the meeting.

Address by IPU President and briefing by IPU secretariat

8.14 The President of the IPU, Mr S. Paéz from Chile, again addressed the ASGP meeting. Martin Chungong also briefed the meeting on the current and future activities of the IPU. Both contributions were warmly appreciated by members.

Consideration of Parliamentary matters

General debates

8.15 The general meetings of the ASGP continued the format of general, thematic debates. The two chosen subjects were:

- The development of parliamentary staff (proposed and led by Australia)
- Inter-parliamentary co-operation within geopolitical groups.

8.16 There were also presentations and discussions on specific parliamentary topics.

Administrative matters

New members

8.17 A number of new members were admitted to the Association. Most were replacing existing members who had retired or moved to other employment.

Electronic meeting

8.18 The Executive Committee held its first electronic meeting, proceeding under agreed guidelines, to establish the draft agenda for the meeting. Subject to late adjustment made necessary by the inability to attend of a member listed to present a communication, the agenda was subsequently adopted by the ASGP membership present.

Executive Committee matters

8.19 There were two vacancies on the Executive Committee, following the completion of the term of service of Mrs Emma Lyrio Reyes from The Philippines

and Mr Prosper Vokouma from Burkina Faso. Mr Harris paid tribute to the contribution made by both members. The successful members at the election to fill the vacancy were Mr Samuel Waweru NDINDIRI (Kenya) and Mr Pitoon PUMHIRAN (Thailand).

Speakers' Conference in New York

8.20 The First Conference of Speakers organised by the IPU was held in New York in 2000. During that conference, at the suggestion of a number of members, an informal assembly of ASGP members attending with the Speakers of their legislatures took place.

8.21 The Second Conference of Speakers is scheduled to be held in New York from 5-7 September 2005. The meeting agreed that, on this occasion, more formal arrangements would be put in place involving the designation of a meeting place, the provision of interpreter services and the setting of a formal agenda. The following items are included on the agenda:

- The United Nations reform process
- The Second Speakers' Conference: Aims and intents
- The outcome of the Conference and its declaration on bridging the democracy gap in international relations: A stronger role for parliaments.

Next normal meeting of the ASGP

8.22 The next normal meeting of the Association will be in Geneva in mid October 2005. A draft agenda has been agreed, and this will appear on the ASGP website. Included on the agenda is an item sponsored by Australia on the intern experience from a parliamentary and an academic point of view. The Executive Committee invited Professor Stephen Levine, from New Zealand, to join Mr Harris in a joint presentation.