



CELEBRATION OF IPU'S 130TH ANNIVERSARY ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PARLIAMENTARISM



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

130
years of
empowering
parliamentarians

Sunday, June 30, 2019

On 30 June, International Day of Parliamentarism, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) celebrates its 130th anniversary. What began in 1889 as a small group of parliamentarians, dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue, has since grown into the global organization of national parliaments. By the end of 2019, IPU membership will inch closer to being universal - consisting of 180 national parliaments, 12 supranational parliamentary bodies, and increasing numbers of parliamentarians who attend its meetings.

“Democracy, human rights, multilateralism and the rule of law are being increasingly threatened in our world today. It is therefore urgent to take the lead and redefine our institutions, to put them at the service of the people we represent,” said IPU President Gabriela Cuevas Barron. “The IPU is determined to bolster parliamentary diplomacy as the main driver of political dialogue for peace and development and so contribute to the reinforcement of democracy worldwide. Democracy can work only if parliaments are effective, dynamic and transparent and add up to the well-being of all people, especially women and youth. That’s why the IPU today, 130 years after its creation, is needed more than ever before.”

“The IPU has stood the test of time, constantly expanding over 13 decades and adapting to face the challenges of the world,” said IPU Secretary General, Martin Chungong. “However, despite our growth, we have never lost sight of the principles of our founders – the importance of an open forum for parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy to resolve differences and help build bridges between nations.”

The IPU will celebrate its anniversary under the umbrella slogan of “130 years of empowering parliamentarians”

About the IPU

The IPU was founded on 30 June 1889 in Paris as the first political multilateral organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations. The IPU was founded by two parliamentarians – one British, William Randal Cremer, and one French, Frédéric Passy. Passy went to win the first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 followed by Cremer in 1903.

In 1899, the IPU was instrumental in setting up the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which still functions today.

Since the 1950s, the IPU has provided technical assistance to over 100 parliaments. To date, 120 national parliaments have endorsed the IPU’s Common Principles for Support to Parliament.

The IPU has been empowering women MPs since the 1921 IPU Conference in Stockholm when female delegates were welcomed for the first time.

In 1974, the IPU pioneered in the field of gender equality, creating a separate gender programme and beginning to collect data on women



in politics, becoming an authoritative reference. The percentage of women in parliament has gone up from 11.3 per cent in 1995 to 24 per cent today.

In 1976, the IPU established the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the only international mechanism in the world that defends the human rights of MPs. Over the decades, the Committee has helped hundreds of MPs whose human rights were abused. It is currently defending the cases of over 500 MPs from around 40 countries.

In 1994, the IPU published the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections. In 1997, the IPU adopted the Universal Declaration on Democracy.

In 2010, the IPU set up the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, an international framework for youth participation in democracy. Influenced by the IPU, some countries have now established electoral quotas and targets, lowered the age of eligibility, and set up networks of young MPs.

Since it began its regional seminars on the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the IPU has mobilized almost half the world’s parliament to take action on, for example, climate change and better health for all.

130 years after its creation, the IPU still provides a unique global space for parliamentary diplomacy by bringing opposing sides around the table; for example, East and West during the Cold War, the Middle East, North and South Korea.

Twice a year, the IPU convenes over 1,500 parliamentary delegates and partners in a world assembly.

Bhutan and IPU

Parliament of Bhutan became the 163rd member of IPU at its General Assembly held in Geneva on 7th October 2013. Bhutan’s application to join IPU was first endorsed by the two houses of Parliament.

Since then, Bhutan has participated in the General Meetings of the IPU, recently the Hon’ble Speaker led a parliamentary delegation to the 140th General Meeting held in Doha Qatar on the theme “Parliaments as Platforms to enhance Education for Peace, Security and the Rule of Law” from 6-10 April 2019.

Bhutan also participates in the Association of Secretaries Generals of Parliament annual meetings which is also being conducted on the side-line of IPU Assembly.

Being a member of a global organization of national parliaments has benefitted Bhutanese Parliament in developing partnership and cooperation with other member parliaments which are committed to promoting democracy, equality, human rights, development and peace.

The Parliament of Bhutan joins the other member national parliaments of IPU in celebrating its 130th Anniversary on its International Parliamentarism Day.