



## British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union Newsletter April 2016

In very productive period since late 2015, BGIPU has seen the election of a new Executive Committee, a range of inward and outward delegations visits, our joint European Security seminar with Wilton Park in mid-February and IPU meetings including the recent 134th Assembly in Lusaka. BGIPU ended the financial year with all activity and financial targets met and an approved forward programme for the year ahead based on the newly approved BGIPU Strategic Business Plan for the next three year period. There will be a wide range of activities in Westminster and further afield prior to the summer recesses.

**Rick Nimmo, Director**

### **IPU 134: Rejuvenating democracy, giving voice to youth**

19 March 2016 - by *BGIPU*



The IPU's 134th Assembly held 19-23 March 2016 in Zambia, Lusaka had as its main theme "Rejuvenating democracy, giving voice to youth". More than 670 MPs from 131 countries attended this Assembly which saw the re-entry of Comoros, Egypt and Guyana lifting the IPU to 170 members in total. The IPU Assembly, deeply shocked by terror attacks in Brussels on 22 March, adopted resolutions calling for multi-faceted responses to counter the global threat of terrorism and highlighted the threats posed to cultural heritage by conflict and terrorism.

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### **Young MPs Conference commits to enhancing oversight to achieve SDGs**

16 March 2016 - by *BGIPU, Ian Lucas MP*



More than 130 young MPs from across the world committed to enhancing transparency and oversight of public finances as a cornerstone of their fight against corruption at the conclusion of the 3rd IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Lusaka. MPs set their sights on increased public scrutiny of state spending in a series of measures they would take to help achieve the SDGs which commit nations to ambitious targets on reducing inequalities, eradicating poverty, and promoting sustainable economic growth and climate action by 2030.

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### **SDGs bring new optimism to the CSW 60 agenda**

14 March 2016 - by *Baroness Hodgson of Abinger CBE*



BGIPU sent a four-member delegation to CSW 60 led by Baroness Hodgson and including Baroness Northover, Gavin Shuker MP and Jo Churchill MP. Being the first year since adoption of the SDGs, looking ahead to 2030 with an agenda of leaving no-one behind, there was optimism about this new agenda for CSW 60. This was particularly in light of having achieved the hard fought for SDG Goal 5 on gender, as well as having gender mainstreamed across other goals although the Beijing Platform for Action remains the 'gold standard' for gender.

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## Exchanges in France on EU referendum and migration

8 March 2016 - by *Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer*



A cross-party delegation comprising Baroness Miller (LD), Baroness Janke (LD), John Nicolson MP (SNP) and Stuart Macdonald MP (SNP) visited Paris from 8 to 9 March to meet French counterparts in both Chambers on key issues in the UK-France relationship. French interlocutors showed keen interest in discussing the mood in the UK in the lead-up to the EU membership referendum on 23 June. There was also mutual appreciation of the vital importance of both countries working closely to address broader migration challenges.

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## British MPs visit Bolivia in support of closer relations

7 March 2016 - by *Graham Stuart MP*



In early March 2016, a cross-party delegation visited La Paz, Bolivia. The delegation was led by Graham Stuart MP (Con), Chair of the Latin American APPG, Diana Johnson MP (Lab), Shadow Foreign Office Minister for Latin America, Mark Menzies MP (Con) and Nic Dakin MP (Labour), Shadow Minister for Schools. Supported by the UK Mission, the programme included meetings with counterparts, government representatives and civil society, as well as a visit to EU-funded projects in one of the legal coca growing regions.

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## Knesset Speaker addresses UK MPs and Peers

2 March 2016 - by *BGIPU*



The Knesset Speaker, Yuli-Yoel Edelstein visited the UK Parliament on 2 March 2016 during an official visit to the United Kingdom. He was accompanied by Knesset members and staff and delivered an address to members of both Houses in the IPU Room outlining his views on a range of issues related to the peace process, regional affairs and bilateral relations. He also underscored his faith in the value of inter-parliamentary dialogue and the Knesset's commitment to this, including through the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). During his visit to the UK Parliament, Speaker Edelstein also meet the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon John Bercow MP and the Lord Speaker, Baroness D'Souza CMG PC.

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## Iceland Speaker focused on mutual concerns and political structures

29 February 2016 - by *BGIPU*



BGIPU hosted an inter-parliamentary delegation from Iceland led by Speaker Mr Einar K Gudfinnsson from 29 February to 1 March 2016. The visiting Althingi delegation had the opportunity to meet a wide range of key parliamentary figures, including the Speaker of the HoC, the Lord Speaker and the the Leader of the Opposition. The delegation gained key insights into the UK Parliamentary system, explored issues of mutual concern, including regarding the future of UK membership of the EU in advance of the 23 June referendum.

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## Mongolia visit highlights increasing engagement with UK

22 February 2016 - by *BGIPU*



BGIPU hosted a parliamentary delegation from the State Great Hural of Mongolia, led by former Prime Minister, HE Mr Amarjargal Rinchinnyam from 22 to 26 February 2016. The visit served to highlight increasing engagement between the UK and Mongolia across a wide scope of activity including growing trade and investment links. The visitors participated in a series of bilateral events and meetings with counterparts in London, learning more about the work and perspectives of UK counterparts, before travelling to Cardiff for calls in the Welsh Assembly.

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## Challenges to European security: Parliamentary perspectives and responses

15 February 2016 - by *BGIPU*



BGIPU and Wilton Park hosted an international seminar on challenges to European security from 15-17 February 2016, bringing together some 50 UK and international parliamentarians, government officials, NGO representatives, and academic experts. Parliamentarians from a wide range of European countries, engaged both with each other and experts with discussion focussed on key challenges facing European security; increasing migration, a Russia seeking to degrade European cohesion, and the continued need for robust parliamentary democracy.

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## Consolidating parliamentary democracy in Burma

13 February 2016 - by *BGIPU*



Three British MPs write about their experiences in supporting the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNDP induction programme for the new parliamentarians that have been elected to the Hluttaw in Burma. This parliamentary strengthening programme was intended to be complementary to the ongoing assistance provided by the UK Parliament to strengthen and support the consolidation of

parliamentary democracy in Burma and was part of a broader programme of international assistance supporting democratic reform in the country.

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## Evidence-based policy solutions to the world drug problem

8 February 2016 - by [Ian Lucas MP](#)



Ian Lucas MP attended the UN Parliamentary Hearing entitled The World Drug Problem: Taking Stock and Strengthening the Global Response. The Hearing gave parliamentarians an opportunity for an evidence-based reflection on the ways the global community is addressing this complex problem in its many aspects - offering treatment and care to drug users, prosecuting drug offenders, fighting drug production and trafficking, regulating the medical use of opiates. The underlying question of the Hearing was whether the so-called “war on drugs”, which relies on a law-enforcement solution to the problem of illicit drugs, has worked as intended.

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## Annual General Meeting elects 2016 Executive Committee

13 January 2016 - by [BGIPU](#)



The Annual General Meeting of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union was convened on Wednesday 13 January 2016 in the IPU Room at the Palace of Westminster to adopt the 2015 Annual Report and elect the Executive Committee for 2016. It was presided over by the Speaker of the House of Commons, The Rt Hon John Bercow MP, in his capacity as Honorary President of the Group.

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## Timely visit from Shura Council of Saudi Arabia

7 December 2015 - by [BGIPU](#)



A parliamentary delegation from the Shura Council of Saudi Arabia had detailed exchanges with UK counterparts on bilateral and regional issues, including underscoring our common commitment in the fight against Daesh. Ongoing advances in the role of women in Saudi Arabia, including participation in local elections was also welcomed. The delegation engaged parliamentary counterparts on science, technology, innovation and business links to expand bilateral cooperation, culminating in a very productive visit to Oxford University.

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## Global Parliamentary Conference commits to climate action

5 December 2015 - by [Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\) Geneva](#)

MPs from nearly 90 countries have committed to using their parliamentary powers and responsibilities to vigorously fight climate change, whilst urging negotiators on a global accord to define a fair agreement that works for all. Adopting a statement at the end of a



two-day global conference organized by the IPU and the French Parliament in Paris, the MPs reiterated the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the increase in the average world temperature to less than 2 degrees Celcius above pre-industrial levels.

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## **Economic challenges & post-conflict issues dominate Côte d'Ivoire visit**

23 November 2015 - by *BGIPU*



In late November 2015 the British Group hosted Speaker Guillaume Soro from the Côte d'Ivoire National Assembly for a three-day visit to Westminster and two days at the Northern Ireland Assembly in Belfast. He was accompanied by five Members of Parliament and while the programme in Westminster focussed on bilateral relations, the Belfast visit provided an opportunity for the Ivoirians to reflect on Northern Ireland's experiences with national reconciliation and similar challenges they face in addressing issues in a post-conflict society.

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### **PLANS FOR FORTHCOMING BGIPU ACTIVITIES**

Inward Speaker-led Delegation from Nepal | 18-22 April

Annual Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO | Geneva | 13-14 June

World E-Parliament Conference | Valparaiso, Chile | 28-30 June