



## British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union Newsletter December 2016

As we prepare for a busy few months after the Christmas/New Year break, we look forward to the first Executive Committee meeting of 2017 on 24 January under our re-elected Chair, Nigel Evans MP. We have a delegation visiting from Argentina shortly after in late January and a visiting delegation from Poland in late February. In return, we have delegations to Germany, Kosovo and Hungary in February also under preparation, prior to attending the 136th IPU Assembly in Dhaka in early April. Looking back, 2016 has been a truly extraordinary year in both UK politics and on the international stage. BGIPU has played its part, giving members key opportunities to engage with counterparts and, hopefully, better comprehend fast changing events and the impacts on our country. The pace will be no less in 2017 as the UK faces new challenges in negotiating an entirely reshaped global outlook unrecognisable from that we faced just 12 months ago. In times of uncertainty though, it is key to recall that we can only take advantage of new opportunities through maintaining active engagement in the world and our leading role in the IPU greatly facilitates such efforts.

**Rick Nimmo, Director**

### Women Speakers set clear goals to respond to global challenges

13 December 2016 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



Women Speakers of Parliament from across the globe agreed to rapidly develop parliamentary objectives and action plans that put at the core the integrity of our planet and peace and prosperity. At the conclusion of the two-day Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, women Speakers unanimously adopted the Abu Dhabi Declaration that defines concrete steps to tackle geopolitical, socioeconomic, environmental and technological challenges to ensure a more gender sensitive and inclusive world and a better quality of life for generations to come.

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### Disquieting spike in human rights violations against MPs

9 December 2016 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



This year has seen a sharp increase in the number of parliamentarians who have suffered or who have alleged violations of their fundamental rights. In an overview of cases being examined by the IPU's Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians, 459 parliamentarians from 42 countries were investigated in 2016 in comparison to 320 parliamentarians in 2015 and 311 parliamentarians in 2014. This outcome underscores the dangers MPs face across the world in exercising their mandate and their right to freedom of expression.

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## Annual General Meeting elects 2016/17 Executive Committee

7 December 2016 - by *BGIPU*



The Annual General Meeting of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union was convened on Wednesday 7 December 2016 in the IPU Room at the Palace of Westminster to adopt the 2016 Annual Report and elect the Executive Committee for 2016/17. It was presided over by the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, The Rt Hon Lindsay Hoyle MP on behalf of the House of Commons Speaker who is Honorary President of the Group.

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## Iraq delegation keen to highlight unity and partnership with UK

28 November 2016 - by *BGIPU*



BGIPU hosted from late November a delegation from Iraq led by the Chair of the Iraqi-British Parliamentary Committee, Dr Hanan Saeed Mohsin, with seven parliamentary colleagues representing all the key factions of the Iraqi Parliament. The delegation sought deeper engagement with UK counterparts with the key message being that for the first time in decades all Iraqis were united in securing the future with current efforts to liberate Mosul from the control of Daesh being a decisive and important step.

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## IPU & AWEPA Parliamentary Forum at HLM2

28 November 2016 - by *Lord Chidgey*



BGIPU was represented at the 2nd High level Meeting of the GPEDC in Nairobi, including the IPU/AWEPA hosted Parliamentary Forum, by Lord Chidgey, of Hamble-le-Rice. In recent years, international discussions on aid and development have shifted their focus away from the delivery of aid to the effectiveness of development cooperation as a whole, known as the development effectiveness agenda with parliamentarians playing key roles in such deliberations.

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## Gender-sensitive reforms in parliaments needed to eliminate VAW

24 November 2016 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



Marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, IPU is launching an innovative self-assessment toolkit which assists parliaments in reviewing their functioning and working methods, and how these contribute to gender equality. This is a follow-up to the IPU's landmark study on sexism against women MPs as part of the IPU's commitment to advance gender-sensitive reforms in parliaments. BGIPU has been active in promoting the IPU's work and sees the launch as a vitally important contribution to such efforts.

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## Parliamentary Meeting at UN Climate Change Conference (COP22)

13 November 2016 - by *Baroness Northover*



A meeting jointly organised by the IPU and the Moroccan Parliament, bringing together parliamentarians from all over the world, was held on 13th November 2016 in Marrakech, one week into the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22). The aim was to involve parliamentarians in promoting awareness of the issues being discussed at COP22, so that they could better hold their Governments to account for delivering on commitments made at COP21 in Paris in December 2015.

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## Joint visit by BGIPU to Portugal and Cabo Verde

6 November 2016 - by *BGIPU*



From 6-12 November 2016 BGIPU-Chair Nigel Evans MP led a delegation to both Portugal and Cabo Verde. While the 2 days spent in Lisbon focussed mostly on the future bilateral relationship between the UK and Portugal in the context of Brexit, the second part of the visit in Cabo Verde gave the delegation an opportunity to learn more about a small country off the West African coast that is mostly known as a tourist destination, but deserves more credit for its political stability and democratic credentials in an otherwise troubled region.

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## Dominican Republic keen to strengthen friendship with UK

6 November 2016 - by *Gareth Johnson MP*



From 6-11 November 2016, Gareth Johnson MP led a UK inter-parliamentary delegation to the Dominican Republic. During the visit, the UK MPs and Peers were greatly impressed by the huge economic potential and charm of the country, albeit also hearing about challenges in managing relations with neighbouring Haiti, including in managing complex border issues. In meetings with parliamentary counterparts, students and officials the delegation also discussed the future of bilateral trade post-Brexit.

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## 135th IPU Assembly highlights human rights role of parliamentarians

23 October 2016 - by *BGIPU*



The IPU met in Geneva from 23-27 October for the 135th Assembly to debate "Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders". In addition to acknowledging the achievements of its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians on its 40th anniversary, the debate also highlighted the key role played by parliamentarians as human rights defenders. Among other outcomes, the Assembly held an emergency debate on the situation in Syria and passed a resolution on the political empowerment of women.

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## Tribute to IPU Founder Sir William Randal Cremer MP

29 September 2016 - by *BGIPU*



BGIPU staff visited Hampstead Cemetery on 29 September to pay tribute to the life and work of the UK parliamentarian who founded the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Sir William Randal Cremer MP. His initiative with French counterpart, Frederic Passy, in 1889 created a global organisation now numbering 170 member parliaments spanning the globe. The IPU facilitates inter-parliament dialogue to enhance global peace, promote democracy and end the scourge of war.

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## Productive Uruguay visit beefs up bilateral relations

18 September 2016 - by *Nigel Evans MP*



A five-member delegation of UK Parliamentarians visited Uruguay from 18-23 September led jointly by BGIPU Chair, Nigel Evans MP, and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, the Rt Hon Lindsay Hoyle MP. The visit provided opportunities to meet Uruguay counterparts and explore key trade and economics aspects of this long-standing bilateral relationship. This was very timely in light of the UK's recent decision to leave the EU and Uruguay's desire to capitalise on this to see trade relations between both countries flourish for the future.

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## Timely visit to Philippines highlights bilateral links

17 September 2016 - by *Sir David Amess MP*



From 17-24 September 2016, a cross-party UK Parliamentary delegation visited the Philippines. This was a timely opportunity to engage with the new government and finding out more about the priorities and plans of the new administration under President Duterte. The main areas of interest included the relationship between the Philippines and the UK following Brexit, trade opportunities, human rights and the proliferation of drugs in the Philippines.

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## More democracy key to achieving sustainable development by 2030

15 September 2016 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



Marking IDD (15 September) with the theme "Democracy 2030", IPU called on political leaders everywhere to strengthen connections between the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and citizens' demands for greater transparency, accountability and inclusive decision-making. "We are inviting and challenging all parliaments to think innovatively about democracy's future, including from the perspective of ensuring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development succeeds," said IPU President Saber Chowdhury.

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## Albanian visit gives assurance of continuing partnership

12 September 2016 - by *BGIPU*

From 12-14 September 2016, the Albanian Speaker Mr Ilir Meta MP visited UK Parliament, together with Mrs Arta Dade MP, Mr Gerti Bogdani MP, the Secretary General of the Albanian Parliament and



other parliamentary officials. This timely and valuable visit gave the delegation better understanding of the debate around the UK's vote to leave the EU and an insight into current UK's political dynamics. There were strong assurances that Albania remains an important partner for the UK with firm commitments to strengthen bilateral relations.

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## Annual BGIPU Quiz in support of AMAR Foundation

6 September 2016 - by *BGIPU*



BGIPU hosted a lively and competitive charity pub quiz on 6 September pitting teams of MPs, Peers and parliamentary staff against each other in a spirit of fun and conviviality. BGIPU's guest Quizmaster this year was Andrew Gwynee MP, Member for Denton and Reddish. The beneficiary of the proceeds of the quiz was the AMAR Foundation which is an award-winning charity that works in the Middle East, building and improving the lives and livelihoods through providing professional health and education on a sustained and lasting basis.

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## IPU hails decision by China and USA to ratify Paris climate deal

5 September 2016 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



IPU welcomes the decision by China and the USA to formally ratify the Paris climate change agreement. The IPU has been mobilizing parliaments since the historic deal was signed in Paris back in December 2015. It has underscored the crucial role played by parliaments in ratifying international commitments made by governments and in overseeing their implementation nationally, including by allocating sufficient funds from the national budget in accordance with the IPU's recently adopted the Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change.

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## New UN resolution on interaction between the UN & IPU

27 July 2016 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



The United Nations General Assembly adopted on 25th July by consensus a resolution on Interaction between the UN, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. IPU President Saber Chowdhury welcomed the adoption saying the UNGA decision "recognizes the key role of parliaments and of IPU in helping build political will to tackle the world's many challenges. I am confident that it will provide a valuable framework for taking our strategic partnership even further, for the good of our global community".

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## New IPU-UN agreement charts way forward on cooperation

21 July 2016 - by



IPU President Saber Chowdhury has welcomed a new UN-IPU cooperation agreement signed on 21 July 2016 at UN Headquarters in New York. Building on the growing partnership and interaction between the two organizations, the agreement places the relationship on a stronger footing and will facilitate greater cooperation at the political and operational levels on behalf of “we the peoples”. Among other things, the new agreement will ensure enhanced information exchanges and sharing of best practices in strengthening parliamentary capacity worldwide.

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## Lord McConnell speaks at the Development Cooperation Forum

21 July 2016 - by *Lord McConnell*



Speaking to the Development Cooperation Forum at UN HQ in New York, Lord McConnell stressed the need for more urgency in acting on the Global Goals and the danger in the search for perfect systems and outcomes, as that might block or stall basic progress. He called for more accountability within countries to national parliaments and to citizens with a bottom-up approach to engagement rather than simply international monitoring.

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### FORTHCOMING BGIPU ACTIVITIES

Inward visit by Speaker of Uruguay | 16-17 January 2017

Conference on Feminising Politics | 17 January 2017

Executive Committee Meeting & New Year Reception | 24 January 2017

Inward Delegation from Argentina | 30 January-3 February 2017

UN Parliamentary Hearing in New York | 13-14 February 2017

Outward Delegation to Germany | 13-16 February 2017

Outward Delegation to Kosovo | 13-17 February 2017

Outward Delegation to Hungary | 27 February-3 March 2017

Inward Delegation from Poland | 27 February-3 March 2017

61st Session of the CSW at UN New York | 13-17 March 2017

136th IPU Assembly | Dhaka | 1-5 April 2017