



British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union Newsletter December 2017

The BGIPU programme of inter-parliamentary exchanges was suspended around the time of the 2017 election campaign in advance of the snap general election on 8 June. This BGIPU newsletter contains summaries and links to events which have occurred since commencement of the 57th Parliament from late June 2017 onwards. On 6 December, BGIPU elected its Executive Committee for 2017-18 and we welcome new members to this body as demonstrable evidence of continuing interest and engagement in our work. For the rest of this financial year, and well into 2018-19, we hope to continue to provide members with a diverse, relevant and beneficial programme in advancing UK interests with our IPU member counterparts. We wish all members and friends of BGIPU a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2018.

IPU links democracies in crisis & human rights abuses against MPs

8 December 2017 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



Human rights abuses against parliamentarians reached a new high in 2017, according to IPU statistics. Parliamentarians from Cambodia, Maldives, Turkey and Venezuela alone, where the political situation has been worsening in recent times, account for 35% of the cases. Cases of abuses against women MPs have also reached a record number this year, having tripled since 2014. The IPU's annual review reports that, in 2017 the Organization's Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians examined the cases of 507 MPs in 41 countries.

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MPs at world trade conference urge end to global trade inequality

7 December 2017 - by *BGIPU*



An international gathering of MPs has called for renewed momentum to conclude international trade negotiations that foster sustainable development. The parliamentarians urged all WTO Members to show flexibility and the willingness to compromise in order to conclude this trade round that has already lasted too long. Over 500 participants, including some 220 MPs from 56 countries, attended the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO from 9-10 December in Buenos Aires, which preceded the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference.

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Annual General Meeting elects 2017-18 Executive Committee

6 December 2017 - by *BGIPU*

The Annual General Meeting of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union was convened on Wednesday 6 December 2017



in the IPU Room at the Palace of Westminster to adopt the 2017 Annual Report and elect the Executive Committee for 2017/18. The AGM 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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Lords Chamber Event debates international relations

1 December 2017 - by *BGIPU*



The 2017 House of Lords Chamber Event took place on 1 December 2017. The event saw young people from around the UK as well as members of civic organisations, including the English-Speaking Union, coming together for an intergenerational debate on this topic : What are the challenges for international relations in the 21st Century? The debate concluded with strong support for the UK continuing to engage with its international partners through regular dialogue and cooperation to achieve a better world for all.

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BGIPU hosts historic visit from Cuba

27 November 2017 - by *BGIPU*



In the run-up to the much anticipated elections in Cuba in early 2018, BGIPU hosted a historic visit by a Cuban parliamentary delegation from 27th November to 1st December. Given many members of the delegation had academic and/or medical backgrounds, the focus of the programme that stretched over three days in Westminster and two days in Reading/Oxford was on education and health.

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Young MPs call for greater youth participation

17 November 2017 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



Young MPs from 51 countries have defined a youth-centred action plan that promotes inclusive democratic and socioeconomic policies for all. More than 120 young men and women MPs attended the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Fourth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Ottawa, Canada on 17-18 November adopting a united approach to end exclusion and marginalization of young people. The UK was represented by Danielle Rowley MP and Ranil Jayawardena MP.

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MPs commit to promoting fair, smart and humane migration

16 November 2017 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



A conference, co-organized by the IPU with the Parliament of Malta and PAM took place in Valletta, Malta, from 16 to 17 November 2017. It concluded Parliaments can play a vital role in ensuring safe and humane migration through the ratification and effective implementation of international treaties. They can also help to change the negative discourse around migration by putting in place and strengthening legislation against xenophobia and racism and by promoting balanced and empirically sound public debate.

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UK delegation joins call for urgent action at COP 23 in Bonn

10 November 2017 - by *Chris Law MP*



From 10-13 November, Chris Law MP (SNP), Clive Lewis MP (Labour), Alex Sobel MP and the Rt Hon Baroness Northover (Lib Dems) attended the IPU Meeting on the occasion of COP23 in Bonn, Germany, on behalf of BGIPU. The delegation assessed that the US decision to leave the Paris Agreement has galvanised all the other nations of the world to work more closely together in tackling climate change head on and the world needs to go faster and further more quickly to save the planet from irreversible climate change.

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Warm welcome for UK delegation to Madagascar

6 November 2017 - by *Tim Loughton MP*



During our week-long visit to Madagascar in November, UK members found a common theme being the great warmth shown towards the British. Madagascar is celebrating 200 years since the friendship treaty with the UK and there is a clear wish from the President down to pursue membership of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the visit by the President to the UK earlier in the Autumn to open a new embassy further underlined the importance they placed on closer links with the UK which was also underscored by the way we were received during our timely visit.

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Mongolia visit underscores strong ties & cooperation with UK

3 November 2017 - by *Lord Howard of Lympne*



From 3-11 November, Lord Howard led a six-member delegation to Mongolia in a reciprocal visit following the Mongolian delegation to Westminster in February 2016. Both sides shared their enthusiasm at seeing new parliamentarians involved in developing the ties between Mongolia and the UK. Mongolia is one of just six genuine democracies in Asia, a truly remarkable achievement given the fact that until 1990 it was, effectively, ruled for hundreds of years under the strong influence of either China or the Soviet Union.

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BGIPU hosts timely visit from Grand National Assembly of Turkey

30 October 2017 - by *BGIPU*



From 30th October to 3rd November, BGIPU hosted a high-level delegation from the Turkish Grand National Assembly led by Mr Hayati Yazici from the AK Party, Chairman of the Turkey-UK Interparliamentary Friendship Group and a former Deputy Prime Minister. The programme included three days of meetings in Westminster and two days in Edinburgh. Topics discussed during the visit included the bilateral and future trade relationship in the context of Brexit, but also human rights concerns, the fight against terrorism and regional relations.

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Close engagement with counterparts from Philippines Senate

20 October 2017 - by *BGIPU*



Following the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union Delegation to Manila in 2016, the BGIPU hosted a reciprocal high level visit from the Philippines from 20 to 25 October 2017 led by Senate President Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III. The visit served to underscore the many common perspectives and mutually beneficial objectives of both parliaments, including strong mutual interest on both sides to expand bilateral relations, particularly regarding people to people contacts and trade and economic links in the context of the UK leaving the EU.

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MPs worldwide call for end of intolerance, mistrust and violence

14 October 2017 - by *BGIPU*



Parliamentarians from 155 countries have committed to pursuing cultural pluralism and peace through interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue. In a declaration issued at the close of the 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, IPU Member Parliaments have called for transparency, accountability and respect for human rights and the rule of law to serve as the basis for building sustainable and peaceful diversity.

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Visit hopes to boost improving relations between UK and Serbia

1 October 2017 - by *Rt Hon John Whittingdale OBE MP*



A UK delegation to Serbia from 1 to 6 October was led by John Whittingdale MP and included Baroness D’Souza David Drew MP, Baroness Northover and Baroness Barker. The delegation met a wide range of members of the National Assembly experiencing considerable warmth towards the UK due to historic ties and people to people links. The major topic underlying almost all our discussions was the declared ambition of Serbia to join the European Union with a target date of 2025 recently announced by the EU.

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MPs meet to discuss sustainable trade at the WTO Public Forum

26 September 2017 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



The IPU and the European Parliament organized a session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (PCWTO) during the 2017 World Trade Organization (WTO) Public Forum on 26 September focussing on "Making trade fair: The contribution of parliaments". Participants discussed what concrete actions parliaments could take to make global trade more sustainable, in line with the SDGs, reversing mistrust of global trade and making sure that trade can help respond to major challenges such as poverty and climate change.

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UK visit world's oldest parliament in Iceland

18 September 2017 - by *Angus MacNeil MP*



A UK Parliamentary delegation visited Iceland from 18 to 22 September 2017 to meet counterparts and explore issues of mutual concern, particularly regarding political developments, UK-Iceland bilateral relations, economic opportunities for the future and the implications of Brexit. The UK delegation had fantastic access and contact at governmental and political levels, as well as other institutions, to hear first-hand how Iceland is progressing as a society despite what can only be seen as a topsy-turvy political landscape.

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UK delegation to Peru builds crucial links with counterparts

17 September 2017 - by *Mark Menzies MP*



A UK inter-parliamentary delegation visited Peru from 17 to 22 September 2017 with the key objectives of building a positive relationship with the country as a key Pacific Alliance state. The visit gave Members of the UK Parliament the opportunity to strengthen connections between our two parliaments and included very positive meetings with the Speaker of the Congress, the parliamentary friendship group and a number of congressional committees and senior Government representatives. The delegation also travelled outside the capital to Cusco.

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IPU launches global campaign for stronger democracies

15 September 2017 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



To mark the dual milestones this year of the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Democracy on 15 September and the 20th anniversary of the adoption of IPU's Universal Declaration on Democracy, the IPU campaign, Get engaged now, calls for people to take action to strengthen democracy. Such actions can mean voting in elections, speaking out against human rights violations, opposing restrictive laws on freedom of expression and joining a civil society organization.

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13th Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians

29 July 2017 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*



The Thirteenth Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians took place from 29 to 30 July. It is part of a series of workshops co-sponsored by the IPU and the Centre for Legislative Studies at the University of Hull. At the workshops, researchers share findings that would be of practical use to parliamentarians. Among the topics discussed with participants from 20 countries were the challenges of strengthening legislatures, public engagement in parliaments, corruption in legislatures and capacity building.

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Growing number of MPs contribute to UN annual SDGs review

25 July 2017 - by *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Geneva*

A record number of MPs from 36 parliaments participated in the 2017 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development, from



10 to 19 July, in New York. The HLPF is the platform where governments and other stakeholders, including parliaments can monitor progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year, 44 countries presented national progress reports.

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Vital parliamentarians work to support UN's Global Goals

17 July 2017 - by [Lord McConnell](#)



On 17 July 2017, on behalf of the BGIPU, Lord McConnell attended the IPU Parliamentary event at the UN High Level Political Forum on the SDGs. This coincided with a visit by members of the APPG on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development. In addition to the obvious scrutiny role of MPs to hold governments to account for delivery, the Global Goals provide real momentum for parliamentarians everywhere to insist upon accountability and pressurise governments for specific legislation and budgetary commitments.

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BGIPU Members discuss priorities with UK Ambassadors

12 July 2017 - by [BGIPU](#)



Taking advantage of the presence in London of British Ambassadors for the annual FCO Leadership Week, BGIPU arranged roundtable meetings on 12 July 2017 for MPs and Peers to discuss recent developments in key African and Latin American countries on our forward programme. This was a unique opportunity for parliamentarians to engage directly with the UK's senior diplomatic representatives to receive updates on national priorities, hear recent developments in bilateral engagement and learn more about key regional trends.

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BGIPU Chair hosts diplomatic corps for State Opening event

21 June 2017 - by [BGIPU](#)



The BGIPU Chair, Nigel Evans MP, speaking to members of the diplomatic corps following the State Opening of Parliament on 21 June, expressed appreciation for the work Ambassadors and their embassies do in support of inter-parliamentary dialogue and highlighted the importance in finding mutual understanding among nations in an increasingly uncertain international landscape.

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FORTHCOMING BGIPU ACTIVITIES

Inward Delegation from Norway | 29 January to 31 January 2018

Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations | UN New York | 22-23 February 2018

62nd Session of the Commission of the Status of Women | UN New York | 12-16 March 2018

138th IPU Assembly | Geneva | 24 to 28 March 2018

