



British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union Online Newsletter: 7 August 2020

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BUILDING BACK BETTER: PARLIAMENTS AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

In the context of the IPU campaign, Parliaments in time of a pandemic, the IPU partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in organising a series of webinars for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.

Following the IPU's first webinar on COVID-19 pandemic preparedness and response on 28 April, a [second webinar](#) took place on 9 July to consider – from a parliamentary perspective – specific country experiences of managing the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications for developing and implementing disaster risk reduction strategies to build back better by engaging with sectors beyond health.

The webinar provided an opportunity for MPs to engage in peer learning with a view to strengthening understanding of risk governance with a specific focus on the distinct challenges facing parliamentarians.



VIDEO: BGIPU CHAIR BRIEFS THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

On 22 July 2020, BGIPU Chair, Harriett Baldwin MP, took the floor of the Summer Adjournment Debate on 22 July 2020 to [outline the work of BGIPU](#) and how its programme has been maintained and expanded into virtual exchanges and events against the backdrop of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Chair thanked BGIPU staff for working relentlessly throughout this crisis to maintain vital links between the IPU's 179 members Parliaments & 46,000 MPs, at a time when it was very important, despite challenges, to uphold such connections.

The Chair confirmed successful virtual bilateral meetings with [Sweden](#), [Norway](#), [Italy](#) and [Colombia](#). She also noted a range of activities such as a discussion on media freedom with John Smith Trust alumni from Georgia, Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, as an event on [refugees](#) with the British Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières and a BBC launch of a [documentary on LGBT issue in Chechnya](#). The Chair also highlighted valuable discussions with [UK Ambassadors and High Commissioners on the impacts on COVID-19 on conflict-affected regions in Africa](#), with [UK Missions on the impact of COVID-19 in Europe](#) and with the [UK Ambassador in Seoul](#) on how South Korea has managed the global pandemic.





IPU PUBLISHES ITS 2019 IMPACT REPORT

The [2019 Impact Report](https://www.ipu.org/impact-report-les-179-Parlements-membres-de-l'UIP) looks back at the results of IPU's work over the year. In 2019, the IPU celebrated its 130th anniversary with events—organized both by the IPU and by Members—and an exhibition highlighting the Organization's history. Some of the IPU's achievements in 2019:

- Parliamentarians meeting at IPU's 141st Assembly in Serbia passed the first-ever parliamentary resolution on universal health coverage.
- IPU published guidelines on making parliaments safe spaces free from harassment & abuse.
- The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians examined the cases of 533 MPs, the second-highest number in its 40-year history.
- The Common Principles for Support to Parliaments received 39 new endorsements from national parliaments.
- A survey of Member parliaments found that 75 per cent of respondents had taken concrete action after IPU meetings, and 31 per cent had put in place new legislation as a direct result of IPU assemblies, programmes, initiatives & resolutions.

"2019 was a watershed year for the IPU as it celebrated its 130th anniversary. With 179 Member Parliaments the IPU has come a long way since the first meeting of a small group of MPs in 1889"



IPU URGES SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT TO COMMIT TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

The IPU is calling on Speakers of Parliaments to promote national action and investment to advance universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IPU has partnered with [UHC2030](#), a multi-stakeholder movement whose mission is to accelerate progress towards access to health for all.

In a [letter](#) co-signed by IPU President, Gabriela Cuevas Barron, a member of the UHC Movement Political Advisory Panel, Speakers are asked to prioritize investments in strong and equitable health systems.

The letter calls on parliaments to encourage their governments “to embark on a ‘whole of society’ approach with strong accountability, gender equity and the empowerment of women in shaping health emergency preparedness and response.”

The letter was sent to Speakers ahead of the next parliamentary budgeting cycle and as the IPU prepares for its virtual Fifth Conference of Speakers of Parliament from 19 to 20 August.

UHC has been a priority for the IPU even before the pandemic. At the 141st IPU Assembly in October 2019, MPs adopted a [landmark resolution](#) on achieving UHC by 2030, which calls for parliaments to put in place legislation to ensure that the right to public health and medical care is guaranteed for all, without discrimination.

In September 2019, world leaders meeting at the General Assembly of the United Nations also endorsed a political declaration committing to UHC by 2030.



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VIRTUAL IPU SPEAKERS CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON MULTILATERALISM & COVID-19

As announced by the IPU Secretariat in Geneva, the first part of the [Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament](#) will take place virtually on 19 and 20 August 2020, organized by the IPU in partnership with the Parliament of Austria and the United Nations. Originally planned to take place in Vienna, Austria, under the overall theme of Parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and planet, the physical conference has been postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the Speakers will meet virtually to discuss parliamentary responses to the pandemic as well as global governance, sustainable economies and the climate emergency.

“We currently face some of the greatest challenges ever witnessed by humanity. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to make this planet a better place for the people that we represent, particularly for women and youth,” said Ms. Gabriela Cuevas, IPU President. “We are the ones who can stop climate change; we can build more inclusive and green economies; we can be fierce advocates for gender equality; and we can ensure that we take the steps needed to overcome COVID-19 decisively, while upholding democratic values and human rights. In the face of these challenges, we must also defend multilateralism and translate international commitments into national and local realities. I am certain that 46,552 parliamentarians can achieve the deep and lasting changes that are desperately needed by millions around the world.”

“The coronavirus pandemic is a test for our societies and parliamentary democracies. In this context, many democracies have had to make tough decisions,” said Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the National Council of Austria. “One of the key lessons of the pandemic is that parliaments must remain the linchpin of crisis management. They contribute to strengthening democratic values by cooperating internationally under the umbrella of the IPU. The Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament will take place in a virtual format this year. However, virtual meetings can never replace in-person encounters and exchange. The Austrian Parliament is thus looking forward to welcoming Speakers from around the planet in 2021 in Vienna.”

The 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament will precede the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament on 17 and 18 August, also in a virtual format. It will focus specifically on priority areas where bold action is needed particularly as a result of the pandemic: climate change, women’s economic empowerment, and preventing violence against women and girls. The World Conference of Speakers of Parliament takes place every five years. Organized in cooperation with the UN, its objective is to reinforce the parliamentary dimension of global governance.

UK Parliament will be represented by Deputy Speaker Nigel Evans MP from the House of Commons & Lord Kinnoull from the House of Lords.

