



ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BRITISH GROUP
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY
UNION
2020

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BGIPU Chair, Harriett Baldwin MP updated the House of Commons on 22 July 2020 regarding virtual activities and future plans due to the COVID-19 global pandemic

ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUP

Chair's Report



**Harriett Baldwin
MP**

I am very pleased to provide my first report as BGIPU Chair, covering activities in the period since our Special General Meeting in March 2020. I was elected following the reformation of the Executive Committee after the December 2019 General Election and the commencement of the 58th Parliament of the United Kingdom.

My time as Chair has coincided with truly unprecedented times for the entire world, as 2020 has seen disruptions to the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) due to global health and travel restrictions created by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Not since the two world wars of the 20th century has the IPU seen disruptions to its schedule of inter-parliamentary meetings in such a substantial way, breaking the cycle of regular inter-parliamentary meetings which is its *raison d'être*.

While those events last century forced the IPU to suspend entirely its work in the face of insurmountable global conflict, current circumstances have made it absolutely vital the world's parliamentarians have been able to come together to discuss new shared realities and solutions in tackling common challenges. On this occasion, the IPU has managed to maintain these important inter-parliamentary links, albeit virtually, including a key focus on dialogue and cooperation in addressing the impacts of the global pandemic.

For its part, BGIPU has been a leading light among IPU members in adopting innovative ways of operating and responding to such new and unexpected challenges by finding new ways for creating meaningful exchanges with counterpart parliaments. Since mid-March when the BGIPU Secretariat commenced its full operation on a “work from home” basis away from the Parliamentary Estate, it has arranged eight bilateral exchanges with counterpart parliaments from Sweden,

Norway, Italy, Colombia, Germany, Republic of Korea, Nicaragua and Tunisia.

These bilateral meetings have been complemented by informative exchanges with UK Ambassadors and mission staff in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Italy, Austria, Sweden, Republic of Korea, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Japan, Indonesia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Mali, Nicaragua, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines and Tunisia. Ensuring a varied and diverse programme for members, there have also been events with key partners such as the BBC and the John Smith Trust. Detailed overview reports of these activities are published on BGIPU's website which supplements this Annual Report and I was also very proud to report these new virtual activities on the floor of the House of Commons on 22 July.

These virtual exchanges can never truly replace physical inter-parliamentary exchanges, high-level meetings or country visits but they have been vital in ensuring members have continued engage in substantive policy discussions with overseas counterparts and stay up to date with fast-moving global developments. In these uncertain times, as we respond to COVID-19 and other challenges, our exchanges have underscored effectively how the global pandemic exacerbates existing security threats and potentially can reverse decades of improved prosperity through key global institutions and initiatives such as the Global Goals.

The troubled state of multilateralism has also made global responses to the pandemic more difficult meaning our dialogue and cooperation under IPU auspices remains an important source of support for collective responses through the United Nations and other key global institutions, like the WHO, WFP and others. To this end, the IPU sought rapidly to maintain its engagement with member parliaments through virtual means, moving all its programmed activities online through video conferencing meeting platforms.

While the IPU's planned 142nd Assembly in Geneva in spring was unavoidably deferred, commendable effort went into convening an extraordinary 206th session of the Governing Council of the IPU from 1-3 November 2020. This virtual format also saw the IPU's first ever electronic vote for the IPU Presidency which was won by Duarte Pacheco of Portugal. Despite IPU members being unable to gather together, the IPU was still able to elect Executive Committee members, adopt a budget, work programme and meeting schedule for the next year, debate membership issues and MPs' human rights cases and hear the outcomes of key meetings, including the virtual 5th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament held in lieu of the physical event now scheduled for Vienna in 2021.

In addition to this major IPU meeting, I was very actively engaged in virtual meetings of the Twelve Plus geopolitical group as it coordinated approaches to the Governing Council and the IPU Presidency race. BGIPU has also facilitated UK participation in other IPU meetings hosted online on a wide range of issues including global health responses to the COVID-19 outbreak, the impacts of the pandemic on parliamentary meetings and mechanisms, global development issues, including the UN Global Goals, climate change, human rights, democracy and peace and security issues. It was very unfortunate the excellent delegation BGIPU had already selected to attend the 64th Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March could not proceed when the event was cancelled.

Albeit currently in virtual format, BGIPU's inter-parliamentary events and activities would not be possible without the invaluable support we receive from UK Ministers and Her Majesty's Ambassadors and Embassy staff overseas and FCDO officials at home. In closing I would also wish to recognise the remarkable adaptability of the BGIPU Secretariat which despite significant challenges moved quickly to continue to deliver to members an effective programme of inter-parliamentary engagement despite drastically changed and challenging circumstances.

While I enjoy, for now, the unique distinction of being the only BGIPU Chair in history not to undertake a single overseas visit in this capacity, I look forward to your future support for my leadership as we move into a new and hopefully expanding phase of interparliamentary activity as the global pandemic recedes in the face of our collective efforts between all nations and IPU members.

Harriett Baldwin MP
Chair, British Group IPU
10 November 2020

Director's Report



Rick Nimmo

Director, BGIPU

For the information of all members I am pleased to be able to provide an overview of the main management issues addressed by the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) Secretariat this year. From the outset, I acknowledge that 2020 saw entirely new and unpredictable conditions which prevented the Secretariat delivering most of its planned programme of inter-parliamentary work apart from the UN Parliamentary Hearing in New York in February and a delegation visit to Liberia in early March as international travel was impossible for long periods, preventing bilateral visit exchanges and multilateral meetings under IPU auspices for most of the year.

Despite this unparalleled setback to its work, BGIPU managed to meet all required governance mechanisms and procedures following the re-composition of the Executive Committee in March 2020 (noting the 2019 AGM was delayed by the General Election and not convened until March 2020 just weeks before the first national shutdown). In very short order under the new Executive Committee's guidance, BGIPU adapted rapidly to a virtual meetings format to continue to deliver BGIPU's activities throughout the period, albeit in online virtual format. Achievements include the successful conclusion of a new Financial Memorandum (FM) with funding bodies in both Houses, approval of audited accounts, agreement of a new programme including virtual meetings and webinars and decisive consideration of administrative and policy matters arising through the year.

While the current three-year 2019/20-2021/22 Strategic Business Plan remains relevant as future planning guidance, most of BGIPU's projected programme was disrupted or required deferral due to the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Respecting health and social distancing requirements in both Houses, BGIPU activated

pre-existing contingency plans to enable the Secretariat team to operate effectively away from a centralised office on the parliamentary estate, setting up in individual homes in different parts of the United Kingdom. This mode of operation has continued now for eight months at time of writing and is anticipated to be required for some time into 2021.

In support of the 2020-21 Request for Funding submitted in September 2020, I undertook a detailed review of progress against the BGIPU objectives contained in the current Strategic Business Plan as required by funding bodies. This review noted the impacts of the global pandemic and the cancellation of most planned activities and recognised the importance of creating viable replacement activities, including a programme of virtual bilateral exchanges and participation in a range of online IPU meetings and events. Given the decreased resourcing required for this new programme, BGIPU has continued to monitor closely its financial reserves, responding to lower expenditure patterns across the programme period by moderating its uptake of agreed nominal funding to avoid a blowout in reserve levels. The quality and accuracy of BGIPU's financial accounts was again recognised by external auditors and I express gratitude to Finance and Administration Manager, Ms Alexandra Milsom, for her efforts to maintain excellent accounts despite the constraints of working from home, including having to process payment approvals remotely through the mail to maintain accurate physical records.

BGIPU had an unchanged workforce of eight staff throughout 2020 after a period of instability in the previous years addressed through steps to enhance conditions and improve staff retention. The senior management team has developed close attention to staff welfare and training during the current year's challenges with all staff operating on a "work from home" basis since mid-March 2020 with staff morale, well-being and communication being key to maintaining staff cohesion and performance levels in highly difficult and unusual circumstances. The Deputy Director, Ms Dominique Rees, who is in charge of formulating and delivering BGIPU's core work programme deserves

particular praise for outstanding creativity in reworking BGIPU's work programme into this new virtual format so staff were able to continue to provide a very diverse and informative programme of events for all members.

The new redesigned website launched at the end of 2019 has proved successful in allowing easier content uploading and reporting of key activities and we have also started an online newsletter as an additional membership tool during the suspension of physical programme activities. BGIPU also uses Twitter as a key outreach channel with over 3,000 Twitter followers and a total of over 22,000 tweets since 2012. We have been pleased to continue a series of partnership events with the John Smith Trust and the BBC World Service and have joined with a variety of other bodies to host virtual roundtables and webinars as part of an online programme of events and activities. BGIPU has close cooperation with other inter-parliamentary bodies, particularly the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (UK Branch) and engage with All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) although financial support for bilateral exchanges are suspended due to restrictions on parliamentary-funded travel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All Secretariat staff are grateful to members of the Executive Committee for their support this year, particularly Harriett Baldwin MP, who has been a very active and supportive Chair at a time when so many interparliamentary exchanges have had to move online and compete directly with other parliamentary commitments and vital constituency needs. The support and interest of members remains the Secretariat's driving motivation. I must also pay tribute to Baroness Hooper, a stalwart of the Executive Committee and IPU Assembly delegations over the last decade who has now completed her three-year maximum term as Vice-Chair and we look forward to her continuing to make an important contribution, as always, on the Committee into the future.

The Secretariat is thankful for the assistance of the budget holders in

both Houses, Ms Lynn Gardner and Mr Jake Vaughan, as well as the support of both Speakers' Offices. Likewise, we are grateful for the cooperation of other staff across both Houses, particularly Committee experts and other specialist staff who have played key roles in assisting BGIPU in facing the huge challenges of 2020. We are also grateful to all external partners and counterparts, including HM Ambassadors and UK missions abroad as well as FCDO staff in the UK for their support for BGIPU work.

We also pay tribute to the staff of the IPU Secretariat in Geneva led by Secretary General Martin Chungong who have dealt with enormous challenges in maintaining the momentum, integrity and relevance of the IPU's work which they have done brilliantly despite significant obstacles. We look forward to working with them and other counterparts in moving the IPU forward as the world frees itself from the grip of the global pandemic, having learned key lessons and valuing even more intensely the principles which unite us globally across the IPU's member parliaments.

Rick Nimmo
Director, British Group IPU
10 November 2020

Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting of the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union

(deferred due to December 2019 General Election)

Wednesday 4 March 2020

The Annual General Meeting of the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union was held in the IPU Room, Houses of Parliament, on Wednesday 4 March 2020. Mr Speaker, The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, was in the chair as Honorary President.

Item 1: Opening remarks by the Speaker of the House of Commons, The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP – Honorary President

MR SPEAKER:

My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, I now call this Annual General Meeting to order by ringing the bell—I have always wanted to do that. This is actually my second time chairing the BGIPU AGM, having presided as Deputy Speaker back in December 2016.

I extend a very warm welcome to everybody, and I hope you have had some time to review the 2019 Annual Report—you will be tested to check that you have—which was published on the BGIPU website on 28 November 2019. Hard copies are available here for those who would like one.

Please note that there is an election ballot today, just outside in the hallway. The election for the new Executive Committee will be dealt with under item 8.

Item 2: Apologies for absence

MR SPEAKER:

Do we have any apologies for absences?

RICK NIMMO, DIRECTOR:

There are fourteen apologies.

MR SPEAKER:

Fourteen apologies. Let us move on to the adoption of the minutes.

Item 3: Adoption of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 27 November 2018

MR SPEAKER:

We are now required to adopt the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 28 November 2018. These are printed on pages 19 to 38 of the 2019 Annual Report. May I have a proposer and seconder that the minutes be adopted as a true record of the meeting?

(Proposed by Seema Malhotra MP and seconded by Dr Lisa Cameron MP.)

All those in favour please raise your hand. Any against? I shall now sign the minutes as a true record.

Item 4: Matters arising from the minutes

MR SPEAKER:

Are there any matters arising from those minutes? If not, I will move on to the adoption of the Annual Report.

Item 5: Adoption of the Annual Report for 2019

MR SPEAKER:

I now invite the Minister of State for Asia and International Development, our good friend Nigel Adams MP, to propose the adoption of the 2019 Annual Report.

NIGEL ADAMS MP:

Thank you very much indeed, Mr Speaker. Colleagues, it is a great pleasure for me to formally propose the adoption of the Annual Report and to acknowledge its significance. As Mr Whittingdale said in his foreword, last year marked the 130th anniversary of the IPU, so I offer my hearty congratulations and sincere thanks on behalf of the FCO for all that the Group has achieved in 130 years of parliamentary democracy. I thank you for everything you have done, and every single individual who has travelled abroad to promote British interests and values and, very importantly, to champion democracy.

As the new Minister of State for Asia, I know the importance and value of travelling to far-flung places, though I can assure colleagues that I have not been anywhere yet. I am struggling to get back to Yorkshire.

MR SPEAKER:

You're very lucky!

NIGEL ADAMS MP:

No matter what the technology is like, there is nothing like having a face-to-face meeting—there is no substitute for that. This Group, the delegations that you send and the foreign delegations that you host play a key role in diplomacy and in starting those conversations that promote and identify common goals that join us with our fellow parliamentary democracies.

As we all know—those of us who were here—in parliamentary terms 2019 was an incredibly busy year, but that did not prevent the IPU from achieving a great deal. I understand that delegations to Ethiopia, Lithuania, France and to the IPU Assemblies in Qatar and Serbia were extremely positively received. I understand that the trip to Brazil was cut short, and I know that you plan to reinstate it this year to complete what was a full and interesting programme. Your international parliamentary seminar on media freedom promoted our core British values.

You were very generous hosts to our ambassadors during the FCO leadership week. That hospitality shone through when you hosted a delegation from the Netherlands. Your conversations about bilateral relations are incredibly important and timely. When you welcomed parliamentarians from North Macedonia to discuss the proposed anti-discrimination legislation, you supported our global LGBTI protections. Your facilitation connected delegations from Slovakia, Kosovo, Lebanon and Italy. All these visits, inward and outward, provide vital opportunities for us to educate and, crucially, for us to learn from our colleagues. Mr Whittingdale—he is not around —

MR SPEAKER:

Sir John.

NIGEL ADAMS MP:

Sir John. I am sure he has other matters on his mind, but I congratulate him on his chairmanship of the Group over the past year and his accompli...accomplish—he's done a really good job. It was indeed a historic year to be Chair. In his speech to mark the anniversary, he emphasised the IPU's founding principles, which are still very relevant today.

I agree that in a world that, as we know from recent events, gets more complex by the year and by the week, the 130-year mission to build friendship, understanding and co-operation is more important than ever. I will finish by wishing the best of luck to the incoming Chair and Executive Committee. I know that I, my ministerial colleagues and officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office look forward to working with you all in friendship in 2020 and beyond. Thank you very much indeed.

MR SPEAKER:

Thank you for proposing that, Nigel. Now we have our other great friend and colleague, Fabian Hamilton, the shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament.

FABIAN HAMILTON MP:

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would like to associate myself with all the remarks and congratulations that the Minister has made this afternoon, and, formally, to second the Annual Report.

As I begin, I am reminded of something our esteemed co-founder Sir William Randal Cremer said in his Nobel lecture. In that speech, given more than 150 years ago, he spoke of “pilgrims of peace”. That is something that comes to mind as we are all gathered here today. While he was the parliamentary representative for Haggerston in London, Sir Randal realised that being an MP was more than just about producing legislation. It involved more than simply scrutinising laws and doing the very best for constituents. Those are all essential parts of an MP’s role, of course, but he believed that being an MP was something that could have the resources and moral authority to make a better life not just for constituents at home, but also across the world as a whole. Indeed, he believed it was the duty of parliamentarians to do so.

Those sentiments remain with us today and are probably the most important, considering the increasing complexities of our modern world. Actions at home have the ability to affect others thousands of miles away, and even to reverberate back to us, as we know so well. We must work together to tackle the crises that affect us all, which today include issues from climate change to nuclear proliferation, as well as what we see with global pandemics such as Covid-19—we will not talk about that.

In order to maintain peace and stability at home, we need to listen to, understand and co-operate with others. In other words, our job here at the British Group IPU is, as Sir William suggested, to become pilgrims of peace. Our goal is to empower our fellow sister Parliaments and parliamentarians around the world to promote peace, democracy and the rule of law. It is to go forth in that spirit of friendship and to share our resources and knowledge with our fellow men and women across the world.

The past year has seen many testaments to that endeavour, even if it often seemed that most of the time we spent with international parliamentarians was trying to explain the constant twists and turns of Brexit. While that was particularly the case with visits from MPs from our former EU colleagues Italy, the Netherlands and Slovakia, we were resolute in our determination to ensure that relations with those friendly countries will not change after our departure.

We were visited, as you will recall, by delegations from two of the youngest countries in Europe, North Macedonia and Kosovo. The British Group discussed their aspirations to join the EU and how to foster greater co-operation between ourselves and their fellow Balkan neighbours. We were also fortunate to have been visited by a parliamentary delegation from Lebanon during a tumultuous few days in September.

Indeed, the British Group IPU visited a number of Parliaments in the past year. A trip to Ethiopia involved meetings with Foreign Affairs Ministers, Select Committees and delegations related to human rights in the country. A visit to Lithuania reaffirmed bilateral relations with that country and expressed our determination to remain strong friends once we are outside the EU.

In June, some of us in this room went on a pilgrimage of sorts, to Paris, to celebrate the 130th anniversary of the first inter-parliamentary union. I was only sorry that I could not join it. The IPU was founded in that city by the original pilgrims of peace, Sir Randal Cremer and his French counterpart, Frédéric Passy. A joint declaration was issued, extolling continued commitment to the original principles and values of the IPU.

The IPU has never ceased in its mission of multilateralism. At the Doha Assembly last year, MPs from more than 160 national Parliaments strongly endorsed the importance of education to support and nourish

peace, democracy and human rights. In Belgrade, a number of our members discussed the importance of Parliaments and parliamentarians in strengthening international law.

The past number of years has seen, as the Minister alluded to, a frightening deterioration in media freedom globally. Almost 250 journalists are in prison somewhere in the world, denied their human right to freedom of expression, so I was particularly heartened and proud of the work a number of our members did with our fellow parliamentarians from Canada on the international parliamentary seminar on media freedom last September, led by our outgoing and excellent Chair, John Whittingdale. More than 13 countries were represented at that event, sending a strong message in support of media freedom.

Promoting freedom, representation and human rights is vital to our work in the IPU. Our members took part in the commission on the status of women and the global conference of young parliamentarians. Peace and democracy can only be achieved if we involve all of society's stakeholders, which of course must always include women and young people, through dialogue and multilateralism.

I believe that multilateralism is now needed more than ever. As I have previously said, the complexities and interdependence of today's world make organisations like the IPU even more important than ever. As Labour's shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament, I am alarmed by the slow unravelling of the multilateral agreements and institutions that form the necessary architecture of trust in the rules-based system of international law that we certainly need more than ever today. More often than not, our leaders seem to speak over each other, rather than to each other. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to maintain our communications with our brothers and sisters abroad and to fight the attacks against multilateralism globally.

2020 sees some important global gatherings, including the United Nations climate change conference in Glasgow and the quinquennial review of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in New York next month. We, as pilgrims of peace, must ensure that we continue the legacy of Sir Randal Cremer to create a better, more peaceful world. As the last year can attest, I am very confident that we in the British Group IPU will always do our utmost to achieve that.

MR SPEAKER:

We have been very lucky to have such a proposer and seconder. Now that the Annual Report has been proposed, would Members please show, by raising their hand, all those in favour of accepting it? Thank you.

Is anybody opposed? No. It is carried. Thank you.

Item 6: Presentation of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 by Rick Nimmo, Director of the BGIPU

MR SPEAKER:

We now move on to item 6 on the agenda. I call on Rick, the Director, who will stand in the vacant position of Honorary Treasurer for the BGIPU to present the Financial Statements of the Group.

DIRECTOR:

I present the Financial Statements and Annual Governance Statement for the year ending 31 March 2019, shown on pages 44 to 71 of our 2019 Annual Report, which covers the 2018-19 financial year. Kreston Reeves LLP conducted the audit and is represented today at the back of the room. On page 55 of the 2019 Annual Report, our auditors report their unqualified opinion of the Financial Statements. The Audit Committee deliberated on 2 July 2019 and recommended that the Executive Committee approve the Financial Statements, which the Chair and treasurer signed at the Executive Committee meeting on 16 July 2019.

The income and expenditure account appears on page 61. Income increased from £1,247,913 to £1,327,255. The Group received the full amount of £1,326,500 grant-in-aid, compared with £1,247,730, or 95% of our available amount, the previous year. Bank interest increased from £123 to £702 due to higher returns in the period. Expenditure increased by £13,559, from £1,249,743 to £1,263,302. A large component of that cost was the IPU subscription fee, which decreased from £373,423 to £359,233 compared with the previous financial year. The aggregated costs of conferences, IPU seminars and outward delegations fell from £295,288 to £229,656. This was primarily because only the autumn IPU Assembly in Geneva fell within the 2018-19 financial year. There were 12 IPU conferences in the year,

compared with 13 in the previous year, with overall expenditure being significantly less, at £55,665. Seven outward delegations were undertaken at a total cost of £157,662, which was slightly higher than in the previous year.

During the year, eight inward delegations were held at a total cost of £92,837. Eleven smaller events, classed as “Days in Parliament”, resulted in a total cost of £8,962. The annual international inter-parliamentary seminar on the Western Balkans cost £53,069, which was significantly over the usual budget due to far greater interpretation costs that were made necessary by the subject matter. Funding was claimed by 13 all-party parliamentary country groups at a total cost of £27,979.

The cost of staff salaries and related expenses decreased from £445,197 to £439,281. Employee numbers dropped throughout the year due to unanticipated departures requiring extensive recruitment efforts to return to normal staffing levels. General hospitality costs rose due to an increase in outreach events, and depreciation costs fell slightly. Audit fees remained flat, and insurance increased marginally. Sundry expenses including bank charges and other office costs have increased, mainly due to purchase of giftware and higher photocopier rental charges.

The balance sheet on page 62 shows that net assets have increased from £729,384 to £793,337, with a net effect being a surplus for the year of £63,953. Fixed assets have increased marginally, with a full summary of changes to these appearing in note 5 on page 68.

Current assets have increased due to the rise in the bank balance from £485,868 to £507,809. Prepayments also increased from £299,935 to £323,580. This was principally due to the IPU Assembly in Qatar straddling two financial years. The figure for debtors has fallen to £979, which is the balance owed on a season ticket loan. The cash flow statement on page 63 reflects the modest increase in cash of £21,941. The financial memorandum concluded in September 2017 was in effect throughout the 2018-19 financial year, and the Annual Report is made public on the BGIPU website prior to the AGM.

MR SPEAKER:

Thank you for that very thorough report. If there are no questions, I will move on to the reappointment of auditors

Item 7: Re-appointment of Auditors

MR SPEAKER:

We are now required to appoint the auditors for the current year. Do we have a proposal that our current auditors, Reeves & Co, be re-appointed?

(Proposed by Alex Sobel MP and the Rt Hon. the Lord Dholakia).

All those in favour please raise your hand.

Any against? No. Thank you. Reeves & Co are duly re-appointed as the Group's auditors for the current year.

Item 8: Election of Officers and members of the Executive Committee for the period 2020.

MR SPEAKER:

I move on to the elections. I take it that the AGM is willing to confirm the election of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Group as published on the website and notified to all members by the Secretariat in an all-member email sent on 25 February. As there are no objections to that outcome, the Presidents and Vice-Presidents are confirmed in accordance with those arrangements.

Regarding the composition of the Executive Committee, there are some members standing unopposed, including three Officer posts as already advised to members. I am very pleased therefore to confirm that the following Officers and the Executive Committee members are elected unopposed: as new Vice-Chair replacing Ann Clwyd, I congratulate Dame Diana Johnson MP. I thank Ann Clwyd for all she has done. *[Applause.]* I also congratulate the other Vice-Chair, Baroness Hooper, a stalwart of the Lords; and I congratulate the new Honorary Treasurer, Alex Sobel MP.

Standing unopposed as Committee members for the Opposition parties are Wayne David MP, Seema Malhotra MP, Chris Matheson MP, Kerry McCarthy MP, Kate Osamor MP, Dr Lisa Cameron MP and Chris Law MP. I am also pleased to confirm the election unopposed of Peers: Lord Gilbert, the Earl of Sandwich and Lord Dholakia. I congratulate all those returning Members on their election and pay tribute to their ongoing commitment to the Group and its objectives, and all the work they have done so far.

Voting is under way for the Government party members from the House of Commons. The ballots will close at 5 pm, but we will need two tellers. Can I have two volunteers who are not candidates in that election and who are willing to stay on after the close to be tellers? The final election result will be confirmed following this AGM and it will be posted on the Group website.

Are you free, Nigel? You are not in the Chair, are you?

NIGEL EVANS MP:

I am free.

MR SPEAKER:

Wayne David? Yes. That's two great people. The Welsh have taken over.

WAYNE DAVID MP:

As ever.

MR SPEAKER:

As ever, indeed.

Item 9: Vote of thanks recognising the contribution of the outgoing Chair of the BGIPU

MR SPEAKER:

I would like to move a vote of thanks in recognition of the outgoing Chair of the Group, the Rt Hon. John Whittingdale OBE MP. I thank John for all his work. He has never shied away from supporting the Group. Even though he has gone back into government, I am sure his heart will always be here and he will always give his support whenever it is needed. We all thank him and we wish him well.

As he is the new Minister for Media and Data, maybe we ought to call on him to give us a bit of publicity at some point in his new role. As the Group's Chair, he has led delegations to IPU Assemblies in Doha and Belgrade, championing important issues such as media freedom. That is why I am pleased he is where he is. I am sure you will all join me in a vote of thanks to John.

MEMBERS:

Hear, hear

Item 10: Any other business

MR SPEAKER:

May I confirm with the secretariat that there has been no written notification, in accordance with the rules, of any other matters of business to be raised?

DIRECTOR:

No, there has not.

Item 11: Closure of meeting

MR SPEAKER:

Having come to the end of our agenda, I now declare this meeting closed. Thank you for your attendance, and may this Group continue in the way that it has done in the past.

Officers and Executive Committee

Following the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday March 4 2020, the under-mentioned were elected as Officers and Members of the Executive Committee.

BGIPU Honorary Presidents

Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP (The Speaker)

Rt Hon the Lord Fowler (The Lord Speaker)

BGIPU President

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (Prime Minister)

BGIPU Vice-Presidents:

Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP

Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP

Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP

Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP

Dan Carden MP

Kate Osamor MP

Rt Hon the Baroness Hayman

Rt Hon the Baroness D'Souza CMG

Rt Hon the Lord Owen CH

Rt Hon the Baroness Boothroyd PC OM

Meetings of the Executive Committee

Since the last Annual General Meeting on 4 March 2020 there have been four Executive Committee meetings: Tuesday 10 March, Thursday 21 May (by video conference), Thursday 9 July (by video conference), and Thursday 22 October (by video conference).

Meetings of the Audit Committee

Since the last Annual General Meeting on 4 March 2020 there have been two Audit Committee deliberations: one through email correspondence in the early stages of the pandemic and one subsequent meeting on Thursday 2 July (by video conference).

Officers & Executive Committee (As elected 4 March 2020)

Chair:

Harriett Baldwin MP

Vice-Chairs:

Ian Liddell-Grainger MP

Dame Diana Johnson MP

Baroness Hooper CMG

Treasurer:

Alex Sobel MP

Executive Committee:

Conservative Party

Sir David Amess MP

Bob Blackman MP

Alun Cairns MP

Alicia Kearns

Ranil Jayawardena MP[^]

Alicia Kearns MP

Mark Menzies MP

Damien Moore MP

Andrew Rosindell MP

Henry Smith MP⁺

Bob Stewart MP

Martin Vickers MP

The Lord Gilbert of Panteg

Rt Hon the Lord Randall of Uxbridge*
(co-opted)

([^]Stood down following Ministerial
Appointment April 2020)

(⁺Replaced Ranil Jayawardena MP in
July 2020)

Labour Party

Wayne David MP

Kerry McCarthy MP

Seema Malhotra MP

Chris Matheson MP

Kate Osamor MP

The Lord Dubs* (co-opted)

Scottish National Party

Dr Lisa Cameron MP

Chris Law MP

Cross Bench

The Earl of Sandwich

Rt Hon the Baroness D'Souza

CMG

Other Party Peer

Rt Hon the Lord Dholakia OBE DL

Membership of the British Group

As a result of rule changes adopted at the AGM on December 3 2014, all members of both Houses of Parliament are deemed to be full members of the BGIPU. As at 11 November 2020, total membership of the group was 1,450.

Members of the UK Delegation at the UN Parliamentary Hearing in New York in February 2020.



UK delegation in Liberia meeting the Minister of Foreign Affairs in February 2020.

UK Delegation of the postponed Conference on the Status of Women meet with civil society representatives in March 2020.



Then Chair Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP following co-hosting meeting with Foreign Office Media Freedom Special Envoy Amal Clooney January 2020.



Virtual Meeting with UK Parliamentarians and John Smith Trust Alumni from Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine in July 2020.

Virtual Bilateral Meeting with Italian Parliamentarians in June 2020.



The Chair and Treasurer attending the Virtual Governing Council Meeting in November 2020.

BGIPU first Virtual Executive Committee Meeting in May 2020.



**REPORT OF THE
INDEPENDENT AUDITORS,
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AND ANNUAL
GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

**Financial Statements and Annual Governance Statement
Year ended 31 March 2020**

**Kreston Reeves LLP
Statutory Auditor & Chartered Accountants
Third Floor
24 Chiswell Street
London
EC1Y 4YX**

Annual Governance Statement

Governance framework

The British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) is an unincorporated association comprising members of both Houses of the UK Parliament united in their support for the aim of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue. Because of an amendment to the BGIPU Rules in December 2014, all members of both houses of the UK Parliament are now deemed to be full members of the BGIPU with a right to participate in the Group's activities.

Governance of the BGIPU is exercised through a 26-member Executive Committee, appointed annually by its entire membership (with provision for up to four additional members to be co-opted annually). The Executive Committee approves and oversees the implementation of a Forward Programme of engagement with counterpart Parliaments, the principal organs of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and other bodies as appropriate in pursuit of advancing the parliamentary dimension of Britain's foreign relations.

Aside from Honorary Presidential posts, the Officers of the BGIPU comprise the Chair, three vice-Chairs, Honorary Treasurer and the Director. The Officers exercise financial authority on behalf of the Executive Committee on a day to day basis. The Officers meet formally as required, usually in advance of any Executive Committee meeting. All decisions taken by the Officers are duly reported to the full Executive Committee at its next meeting. They are supported by a Secretariat, led by the Director and senior staff comprising a Deputy Director, Finance and Administration Manager and well-qualified and appropriately experienced international programme management and administrative support staff.

The Honorary Treasurer as Accounting Officer is responsible for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the aims and key objectives of the BGIPU whilst

safeguarding its public funds and assets in a manner that is consistent with the Financial Memorandum (FM) issued by both Houses of Parliament for the use of the BGIPU's grant in aid. The Honorary Treasurer is also responsible for ensuring such internal control measures are fully implemented in compliance with relevant Treasury and other guidelines. In particular, the role seeks to ensure that all resources are used economically, efficiently and cost-effectively including that the Executive Committee take financial considerations into account in making operational and policy decisions.

The Director is responsible to the Officers and the Executive Committee for the implementation of their decisions and effective administration of the organisation and its Secretariat, observing appropriate personnel management policies. The position is also responsible to the Honorary Treasurer to ensure that effective procedures are in place to control the expenditure of the organisation, to maintain a record of losses, special payments or write-offs, to calculate the budget required to carry out the organisation's authorised activities and to submit the annual request for grant in aid.

The full Executive Committee considers the preparation of BGIPU's forward programme of activities and facilitates through Selection Committees, the identification of the most appropriately qualified delegates for IPU Assemblies and other inter-parliamentary activities. It also decides what action is to be taken on recommendations and resolutions of Assemblies and the Governing Council of the Union, promotes membership of the BGIPU and has overall control of the Group's funds. The Executive Committee is also responsible for formal correspondence with the Secretariat of the IPU, consideration and adoption of the BGIPU Strategic Business Plan and authorisation of the appointment of the Director.

Under the authority of the Executive Committee, the Audit Committee gives advice to the Honorary Treasurer on the adequacy of audit arrangements and the implications of assurances regarding risk and control in the organisation. The Committee regularly reviews the organisation's Risk Register and, when necessary, draws to the attention

of the Honorary Treasurer and the Executive Committee any additional measures needed to control risk or if the scope of the external audit needs to be adjusted.

Arrangements for funding inter-parliamentary groups in the UK Parliament have evolved over many years. While funding of the BGIPU originally came from member contributions, and later the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Treasury, in recent years the funding has been provided directly by both Houses of Parliament with 70 percent allocated from the House of Commons and 30 percent from the House of Lords.

An updated FM was negotiated in February 2017, cleared by the BGIPU Executive Committee on 20 March 2017 and after final approval by the administration of both Houses, signed in September 2017. The FM provides the basis for the continued financial support by the UK Parliament of BGIPU. This latest iteration followed directions set in past memoranda agreed in 2009, 2012, and 2014 respectively outlining the arrangements governing the funding and institutional relationship. The current FM requires the preparation of a detailed annual business plan, including estimated costs of programme and non-programme expenditure, regular quarterly reports of outturn figures and an overall commitment to follow recommended limits on reserves. BGIPU is also required to follow broadly a range of administrative, financial and human resources policies, analogous to in the House of Commons, albeit proportionate and relevant to BGIPU's own unique character and circumstances. Consideration of a new FM with Overseas Offices commenced in late 2019 and will be agreed during the course of 2020, notwithstanding the uncertainties created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Internal risk and audit oversight is exercised by the Audit Committee selected from members of the Executive Committee. The BGIPU also has an annual external audit, with authorised financial statements, an explanatory commentary, and key audit findings presented to the Audit Committee in mid-year for consideration and referral to the Executive Committee. In accordance with the Rules of the Group (last reviewed and amended in December 2014), the BGIPU produces an Annual

Report in advance of the Annual General Meeting. In response to the findings of an audit undertaken by the funding bodies in early 2016, the Risk Register was streamlined, and a new Procurement Policy was adopted by the start of 2017. Some suggestions from this audit outcome were also addressed in negotiating the 2017 FM and the Guidance for Members' Travel was strengthened in subsequent years addressing reputational and operational risk issues to declare a zero-tolerance policy on bullying and harassment, setting clear expectations on members' behaviour in relations to BGIPU activities.

Work of the Executive Committee

The BGIPU Executive Committee met on four occasions during the 2019-20 Financial Year being convened on Tuesday 21 May 2019, Tuesday 16 July 2019, Tuesday 22 October 2019 and Tuesday 10 March 2020. The Audit Committee was convened on Thursday 2 July 2020 to recommend approval of final accounts. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Audit Committee was unable to meet in person as planned on Wednesday 26 March 2020 to consider the auditors' Letter of Engagement and supporting documents, and the Risk Management Strategy, including the Risk Register. Members were invited to read the documentation and make comments by email in lieu of a formal meeting, consistent with social distancing provisions adopted by Parliament. The Annual General Meeting took place on Wednesday 4 March to elect a new Executive Committee for 2020 after being delayed from November 2019 due to the calling of a General Election in December 2019.

Under the guidance of the Executive Committee, the Director has continued efforts to improve the organisation's effectiveness through a sharper focus on BGIPU's strategic priorities and regular review of planning and implementation procedures. Consistent with the requirements of the FM, the Director submitted to the funding bodies in September 2019 the annual review of the Executive Committee-approved 3-year Strategic Business Plan adopted in February 2019. BGIPU also submitted detailed forward planning budgets for the next three financial years in support of BGIPU's 2020/21 Request for Funding. In addition, the Executive Committee approved a detailed Forward Programme for 2020/21 drawing upon the Strategic Business

plan.

Under the day-to-day management of the Director, and with the assistance of the Finance and Administration Manager, the Executive Committee has taken all appropriate steps to ensure staff members are employed on terms broadly in line with those of the House of Commons as required in the FM, including following the appropriate pay-bands and salary levels applying to House of Commons staff. In October 2019 recognising differing constraints on staff recruitment and retention, the Executive Committee enhanced these employment conditions with a new bonus scheme for BGIPU staff following a detailed review of the causes of a spike in resignations in late 2018/early 2019. The BGIPU Secretariat also maintains a comprehensive Staff Handbook, updated regularly in line with any relevant changes to House of Commons policies or practices.

As directed by the Executive Committee, the Secretariat has continued to provide comprehensive activity reporting through its website, in addition to using social media and electronic newsletters to make the Group's work more accessible while ensuring its outreach remains cost-effective. Recognising the need for professional and personal development, there has also been an emphasis on staff training including boosting information technology, communications and design skills, ongoing financial management and budget training, team-building activities and further development of international relations policy skills with support for specialised language training.

Risks

BGIPU's mechanisms and procedures are designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate all risk of failure to achieve the policies, aims and objectives of the organisation. In doing this, it can provide only reasonable, not absolute assurance of effectiveness. This involves identifying and prioritising the risks for the achievement of the organisation's objectives, evaluating the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact in that event, so best to anticipate and manage risks effectively. While unprecedented events like the

COVID-19 outbreak which has blocked all global travel and international meetings could not be reasonably anticipated, BGIPU's existing plans and business continuity arrangements were very effective in allowing all operations to continue to be carried out on a "work from home" basis. Significantly, this occurred at just a few days' notice, without any significant financial costs or productivity losses.

Capacity to Handle Risk

The process of risk management in the BGIPU is based on the judgement and authority of the Executive Committee, including drawing on the experience and advice of the Director and other Secretariat personnel. As far as possible, BGIPU employees are encouraged to take full ownership of their work and be responsible for their part of the risk control process. Members of staff are appropriately informed, guided and trained to manage aspects of risk relevant to their responsibilities. This includes close attention to ensuring due probity and care in the responsible expenditure of public monies. In light of significant disruption to the availability of office holders to act as financial signatories, due to elections, changes to banking requirements (and subsequently office closure and social distancing), severe impacts on BGIPU's ability to meet its financial responsibilities to staff and suppliers were anticipated early and raised with the Executive Committee for action. Appropriate changes were made in October 2019 to maintain payment functions by granting higher level signing rights to senior staff in place of office holders. This creates risks but they are reasonable given the otherwise insurmountable problem of officers being unavailable to approve bank payments.

A working environment which encourages teamwork and dialogue, convenes regular staff meetings and opportunities for individual consultation. The Secretariat also ensures effective processes for the identification and dissemination of best practice and lessons learned. Feedback to the Secretariat on its overall effectiveness and performance is provided by the Officers and Executive Committee and by open report back meetings following completion of projects, attended by the MPs and Peers who have participated in them and other interested stakeholders, including government officials.

Risk Control Framework

A Risk Register has been compiled and approved by the Executive Committee and forms the focus of the organisation's risk management strategy (last reviewed in March 2020). The Director also undertook specialist Risk Management training in 2014 in relation to House of Commons procedures. The Executive Committee has delegated authority to the Audit Committee to regularly monitor and scrutinise the Risk Register and to take appropriate action where necessary. The Audit Committee reports back to the Executive Committee as required to ensure any issues are fully discussed. Risk management is embedded in the organisation through all activity being approved by the Executive Committee, by regular staff reporting and commenting upon good practice, through close review of expenditure and regular scrutiny of the Risk Register by the Audit Committee. Flexibility and responsiveness were always strong guiding principles in risk preparedness. The rapid deployment of business continuity plans in mid-March 2020 to maintain the full and effective operation of the Secretariat in the face of unprecedented disruption was ample demonstration of the effectiveness of planning and adaptability of staff.

Greater clarity around BGIPU practices and policies has been ensured through circulation of the BGIPU Staff Handbook which is regularly updated. In addressing key reputation, financial and operational risks, the Executive Committee had reviewed and updated throughout 2017 the travel and subsistence policies for BGIPU Members entitled "Guidance for Members Travelling Overseas on BGIPU Delegations". This now includes strong language establishing high expectations of Members' overall conduct abroad including highlighting BGIPU's policies regarding harassment and discrimination.

Most residual risks are low. The main risk priorities for the organisation are in the areas of effective project management, which in turn depends upon the professionalism and motivation of staff and the promotion of best practice.

Whilst the Finance and Administration Manager still holds the main

responsibility for the finance of the organisation, the decision was taken in April 2019 to employ the services of a trained accountant to provide professional accountancy advice, support and training on a monthly basis. This was deemed a more effective use of resources and replaced the planned position of a Finance and Administrative Assistant at a significantly lower cost to the organisation for a higher service outcome.

Potential compliance risks, including regarding the taxation status of the BGIPU, were addressed fully and resolved in September 2014 through accessing specialist advice and effective remediation action by the Executive Committee. The Secretariat has also worked to address compliance risks associated with new pension auto-enrolment requirements in the course of 2017, new General Data Protection Regulations in mid-2018, comprehensive harassment and bullying policies introduced for the parliamentary community in 2018 and will also diligently work to comply with any and all relevant public health and employer obligations stemming from responses to the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020.

Review of Effectiveness

It is a significant enhancement to the Group's overall corporate governance that the Executive Committee adopted in February 2019 a multi-year Strategic Business Plan, governing the period 2019/20 to 2021/22, the third such strategy since 2012. This document provides a long-term planning process combined with appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which allows BGIPU to be in a stronger position to assess its effectiveness against key objectives, albeit the unparalleled events of 2020 place significant constraints around achieving many activity and programme goals. The inclusion of an indicative annual programme also allows BGIPU, including both the Executive Committee and the Secretariat, to better judge the scope and level of inter-parliamentary activity, in addition to ensuring the impact of key outcomes in meeting stated goals.

While notionally independent of the management arrangements of both

Houses of Parliament, the fact that the BGIPU is entirely dependent on external funding from Parliament requires it to maintain the full confidence and support of its funding partners. This requires close attention to the provisions of the FM and appropriate transparency and probity to ensure that funding levels are sufficient for implementation of the programme activities being planned. If funding is reduced or withdrawn, there could be insufficient resources available to meet core elements of the Forward Programme and this would put the BGIPU's ability to meet its key objectives at risk. A close, consultative and effective relationship with its funding bodies in both Houses is essential, requiring BGIPU to fully comply with the FM in all its aspects, including through the most prudent management of its reserves.

Notwithstanding the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, based on the feedback of members through formal meetings and informal channels, the support and regular exchanges with the Group's key funding partners, and other key stakeholders, (including the IPU Secretariat in Geneva, the FCO and other relevant UK government bodies), I assess that the Executive Committee and Secretariat are undertaking the key roles and responsibilities of the BGIPU to an appropriate level of effectiveness. This includes regarding its cost-effective use of public monies, its employment responsibilities to staff and its management of its major risks.

Mindful of the key monitoring role played by BGIPU's funding bodies in both Houses of Parliament, I assess the BGIPU's governance mechanisms to be robust, allowing for appropriate management oversight by the Executive Committee, including through the combined audit scrutiny and risk management roles of the Audit Committee. Combined with independent external audit mechanisms, I am confident there are appropriate measures in place to ensure the Group's inter-parliamentary activities are well-targeted and represent effective use of the public monies provided for this purpose.

As Honorary Treasurer, I am assured by reports from the Audit Committee and through witnessing the deliberations of the Officers and the Executive Committee that the current BGIPU governance structure

is sustainable and sufficiently robust in all aspects. On this basis, I have every confidence in concluding that the governance of BGIPU adequately addresses the expectations of its membership, can be responsive to reasonably anticipated changes in its operating environment, fulfils the expectations of its funding bodies and fully meets all its financial, administrative and programme obligations in a fully satisfactory manner. Indeed, having proved itself effective in dealing with the current impacts of COVID-19 on its activities, I am assured that BGIPU remains a robust and responsive body in meeting the requirements of members into the future.

(Signed)

A Sobel MP

Honorary Treasurer

9 July 2020

Statement of the Executive Committee's responsibilities

Under the BGIPU's rules, the duties of the Executive Committee of the BGIPU include the control of the organisation's funds. It is also required to ensure that financial statements (duly audited) are prepared. The Executive Committee of the BGIPU has accepted responsibility for the preparation of these financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 which are intended by it to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the organisation and of the surplus for that period. The Executive Committee has accepted that the financial statements shall be prepared in accordance with UK Accounting Standards (UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In preparing these financial statements, the Executive Committee has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- stated whether applicable accounting standards have been followed; subject to any material departures being disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis as it believes that the organisation will continue to function for at least 12 months from the date of approval of the balance sheet.

The Executive Committee has general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to it to safeguard the assets of the BGIPU and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditor

The Executive Committee confirms that, so far as it is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the organisation's auditors are unaware; and that it has taken all the steps that it ought to have taken to make itself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the organisation's auditors are aware of that information.

Report of the independent auditor to the members of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (the ‘organisation’) for the year ended 31 March 2020 which comprise the Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102. The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the organisation’s affairs as at 31 March 2020, and of its surplus for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor’s responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the organisation in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council’s Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the Executive Committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Executive Committee has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the organisation's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The Executive Committee are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained during the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report the fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Report of the independent auditors to the members of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the organisation and its environment obtained during the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Executive Committee's responsibilities.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters, where we are required to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of the Executive Committee's remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of the Executive Committee

As explained more fully in the Executive Committee's responsibilities statement set out on page 44, the Executive Committee are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Executive Committee determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Executive Committee are responsible for assessing the organisation's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Executive Committee either intend to liquidate the organisation or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the organisation's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the members.

Report of the independent auditor to the members of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Executive Committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organisation's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organisation to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the organisation's members, as a body, determined by the rules of the organisation. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the organisation's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the organisation and the organisation's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

(Signed)

Kreston Reeves LLP

Statutory Auditor & Chartered Accountants

London

Date: 9 July 2020

Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 March 2020

	Note	2020 £	2019 £
Income			
Grant in aid	1	1,205,820	1,326,500
Donations / Subscriptions received from members	1	49	53
Interest receivable	1	1,116	702
Other		-	-
		1,206,985	1,327,255
Expenditure			
Subscriptions		379,483	360,516
Conferences, IPU seminars and outward delegations		197,205	229,656
Inward delegations, BGIPU seminars and days in Parliament		60,179	154,867
All party groups		13,949	27,979
Salaries, national insurance and other staff costs	3	455,333	439,281
Printing, stationery and publications		1,420	1,701
Postage and telephone		5	59
Member services and events in the UK		42,937	23,754
Audit fee for the audit of these financial statements		7,220	7,372
Insurance		5,730	5,461
General hospitality		1,164	4,212
Sundry expenses		10,665	7,099
Legal fees		-	-
Depreciation of fixed assets	5	1,937	1,354
		1,177,227	1,263,302
Surplus for the year	10	29,758	63,953
Opening reserves		793,337	729,384
Closing reserves	10	823,095	793,337

The income and expenditure account has been prepared on the basis that all activities are continuing activities.

There are no other items to be recognised in other comprehensive income.

Notes 1 to 15 form part of the financial statements.

Balance sheet

at 31 March 2020

	Note	£	2020	£	2019
					£
Fixed assets	5		9,386		10,192
Current assets					
Debtors	6	924		979	
Prepayments and accrued income	6	312,352		323,580	
Cash at bank and in hand	7	525,392		507,809	
		838,668		832,638	
Current liabilities					
Creditors	8	(24,959)		(49,223)	
Net current assets			813,709		783,145
Net assets			823,095		793,337
Financed by:					
General fund	10		823,095		793,337
			823,095		793,337

Notes 1 to 15 form part of the financial statements.

These financial statements were approved by the undersigned and authorised for issue on 9 July 2020.

(Signed)
A Sobel MP
Honorary Treasurer
9 July 2020

(Signed)
H Baldwin MP
Chair
9 July 2020

Cash flow statement

at 31 March 2020

	2020 £	2019 £
Cash flow from operating activities		
Surplus for the financial year	29,758	63,953
Adjustments for:		
Interest received	(1,116)	(702)
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	11,283	(22,152)
(Decrease) in creditors	(24,264)	(15,474)
Depreciation charge	1,937	1,345
Loss on disposal	-	-
Purchase of fixed assets	(1,131)	(5,731)
Net cash flow from operating activities	<u>16,467</u>	<u>21,239</u>
Cash flow from investing activities		
Interest received	1,116	702
Net cash flow from investing activities	<u>1,116</u>	<u>702</u>
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	17,583	21,941
Cash at the beginning of the year	507,809	485,868
Cash at bank and in hand at the end of the year	<u>525,392</u>	<u>507,809</u>

Notes forming part of the financial statements

for the year ended 31 March 2020

Accounting policies

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the organisation's financial statements.

1.1 Legal form

The BGIPU is an unincorporated entity, acting as an autonomous body within Parliament and is an independent parliamentary association. The Group is domiciled in the United Kingdom and the address of its registered office and principal place of business is the Palace of Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA. Details of the principal activity of the BGIPU are included in the Annual Governance Statement on page 34.

1.2 Basis of preparation

The BGIPU is not required by law to comply with the requirements of the Companies Act and generally accepted accounting principles. However, as explained in the Statement of Executive Committee's responsibilities, the Executive Committee has accepted that these financial statements shall be prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and under the historical cost convention.

The preparation of the financial statements in compliance with FRS 102 requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise judgement in applying the accounting policies (see note 2).

The following accounting policies have been applied:

1.3 Fixed assets and depreciation

All assets over £100 are capitalised. Depreciation is provided to write off the cost less the estimated residual value of tangible fixed assets by equal instalments over their estimated useful economic lives as follows:

Computers and software - 25% per annum

No depreciation is provided on paintings or the commemorative bell. There is no available market value but it is thought that the current market value would exceed the carrying amount.

1.4 Debtors

Short term debtors are measured at transaction price, less any impairment.

1.5 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours.

1.6 Creditors

Short term creditors are measured at the transaction price.

1.7 Pension costs

The organisation makes payments to both defined contribution pension schemes and personal pension plans for the benefit of its employees.

Contributions payable to the schemes are charged against income in the period in which they fall due.

1.8 Financial instruments

The Company only enters into basic financial instruments transactions that result in the recognition of financial assets and liabilities like trade and other accounts receivable and payable.

Debt instruments that are payable or receivable within one year, typically trade and other payables or receivables, are measured, initially and subsequently, at the undiscounted amount of the cash or other consideration, expected to be paid or received. However if the arrangements of a short-term instrument constitute a financing transaction, like the payment of a trade debt deferred beyond normal business terms or financed at a rate of interest that is not a market rate or in case of an outright short-term loan not at market rate, the financial asset or liability is measured, initially, at the present value of the future cash flow discounted at a market rate of interest for a similar debt instrument and subsequently at amortised cost.

1.9 Foreign currency translation

Functional and presentation currency

The company's functional and presentational currency is GBP.

Transactions and balances

Foreign currency transactions are translated into the functional currency using the actual rate of exchange used when either converting currency, making payments by bank transfer or making payments by way of credit card. Any reimbursement to delegates or staff will be at either the actual rate suffered or up to 3% above the rate prevailing at the time of the transaction to account for standard bank and credit card charges. At each period end foreign currency monetary items are translated using the closing rate. Non-monetary items measured at historical cost are translated using the exchange rate at the date of the transaction.

1.10 Grant in aid

Grant in aid is recognised as income in the financial statements in the period to which the grant relates.

Grant in aid for the year ended 31 March 2020 of £1,205,820 (2019: £1,326,500) has been provided by the House of Commons and the House of Lords; contributing 70% and 30% respectively.

1.11 Conference, delegation and all party group expenditure

Expenditure in respect of conferences, inward and outward delegations and seminars is charged against income in the period in which the event occurs.

1.12 Interest receivable

Interest earned on all bank accounts is recognised in the income and expenditure account on an accruals basis.

1.13 Donations / Subscriptions received

On 1 February 2011, the Executive Committee voted to suspend the annual membership fees. At the AGM in November 2011, the BGIPU Rules were formally amended abolishing the requirement for membership fees. However, there would be no refunds of unnecessary payments, which will be treated as donations in the future.

2 Judgements in applying accounting policies and key sources of estimation uncertainty

No significant judgements have had to be made by management in preparing these financial statements.

3 Staff costs

The total emoluments paid to employees during the year, including pension contributions are disclosed in the income and expenditure account. Staff costs include all independent consultancy fees.

The average number of employees of the BGIPU during the year was 8 (2019: 8).

Staff costs, including director's remuneration, were as follows:

	2020	2019
	£	£
Wages and salaries	345,694	324,963
Social security costs	40,053	36,069
Pension costs	46,724	43,860
Other costs	22,862	34,389
	<u>455,333</u>	<u>439,281</u>

4 Tax status

The BGIPU acts as an autonomous body within Parliament and as such is treated as an independent parliamentary association and accordingly is not chargeable to tax.

5 Tangible fixed assets

	Paintings	Commemorative bell	Office equipment	Computers and software	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Cost					
At beginning of year	3,183	890	631	28,823	33,527
Additions	-	-	-	1,131	1,131
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
At end of year	3,183	890	631	29,954	34,658
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Depreciation					
At beginning of year	-	-	631	22,704	23,335
Charge for year	-	-	-	1,937	1,937
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
At end of year	-	-	631	24,641	25,272
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net book value					
At 31 March 2020	3,183	890	-	5,313	9,386
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 31 March 2019	3,183	890	38	6,119	10,192
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

6 Debtors: amounts receivable within one year

	2020 £	2019 £
Prepayments	312,352	323,580
Other debtors	924	979
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	313,276	324,559
	<hr/>	<hr/>

7 Cash at bank and in hand

	2020 £	2019 £
Interest earning bank deposit accounts	514,385	497,607
Non-interest earning bank current account	10,000	10,000
Cash in hand	202	202
	<u>525,392</u>	<u>507,809</u>

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2020 £	2019 £
Trade creditors	1,073	5,837
Accruals and prepaid income	7,672	34,714
Social security and other taxes	16,156	7,549
Other Creditors	58	1,123
	<u>24,959</u>	<u>49,223</u>

9 Financial instruments

	2020 £	2019 £
Financial assets		
Measured at amortised cost	838,668	832,368
	<u>838,668</u>	<u>832,368</u>
Financial liabilities		
Measured at amortised cost	24,959	41,674
	<u>24,959</u>	<u>41,674</u>

(i) Risk Management

The company's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks, including foreign exchange risk:

Foreign exchange risk

The organisation operates internationally and is exposed to foreign exchange risk with respect to the Swiss Franc and various other currencies, depending on events taking place overseas. Market risk arising from movements in foreign exchange rates is identified and monitored.

(ii) Fair value

The company's financial assets and liabilities comprise debtors, creditors and cash at bank. The book values and fair values of the company's financial assets and liabilities are identical and are disclosed on the balance sheet and within related notes.

10 Reserves

General fund

This reserve comprises all current and prior period retained surplus and deficits.

	General Fund
	£
Balance at 31 March 2019	793,337
Surplus for the year	29,758
Balance at 31 March 2020	823,095

In accordance with HM Government accounting rules, the annual grant in aid income awarded to the organisation is not paid to the BGIPU until the funds are actually required to meet expenditure budgeted for the year. The BGIPU submits returns to the funding providers covering income and expenditure, cash position and adjusted reserves for the previous period and forecasts for the year, before quarterly instalments of grant in aid are agreed and paid. The funding provider advances cash to the organisation when it is required to meet expenditure.

The General Fund balance is carried forward into the next financial year and is unaffected by the change in funding arrangement of the grant in aid.

11 Pension commitments

Contributions payable by the company relating to both defined contribution pension schemes and personal pension plans for the year amounted to £46,724 (2019: £43,860). At the year end, £4,584 (2019: £3,452) remained unpaid.

12 Published financial statements

The approved financial statements will be made publicly available on the website of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at www.bgipu.org.

13 Related party transactions

During the year persons who were members of the Executive Committee at any time during the financial year incurred reimbursable expenditure while participating in delegations on behalf of the organisation totalling £8,508 (2019: £10,170). At the year-end, £nil (2019: £nil) was outstanding and is included within creditors in note 8.

14 Controlling party

The entity is under the control of the Executive Committee and the Director.

IPU

HEADQUARTERS

Executive Committee of the IPU

The IPU Governing Council is the plenary policy-making body of the IPU. Oversight of the administration and advice to the Governing Council is provided by an Executive Committee composed as follows;

Members

Expiry of term

President:

Mr Duarte Pacheco (Portugal)

November 2023

Members:

Mr. A. Abdel Aal (Egypt)

April 2021

Mr. D. McGuinty (Canada)

October 2021

Ms. L. Fehlmann Riell (Switzerland)

October 2021

Mr M. Grujic (Serbia)

October 2022

Mr. G. Chen (China)

October 2022

Mr. G. Gali Ngothé (Chad)

October 2022

Ms. A.D. Mergane Kanouté (Senegal)

April 2023

Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan)

October 2023

Ms. E. Anyakun (Uganda)

October 2023

Mr. J.P. Letelier (Chile)

October 2023

Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden)

October 2023

Mr. P. Krairiksh (Thailand)

October 2023

Mr. J. Mudena (Zimbabwe)

October 2023

Mr. R. Rabbani (Pakistan)

October 2023

Ms. B. Argimón (Uruguay)

November 2024

Ms. S. Kihika (Kenya) Ex Officio

April 2021

Mr M. Bouva (Suriname) Ex Officio

April 2021

Liaison with the International Secretariat

The BGIPU Secretariat has maintained regular and constructive contact with the IPU Secretariat in Geneva on a wide range of issues on the IPU agenda. The Secretariat met with Director, Member Parliaments & External Relations Anda Filip and Conference Services Officer Sally-Anne Sader by video conference in May 2020. International Project Manager Lucy Nash attended the IPU virtual Information Seminar in June 2020. BGIPU hosted a Roundtable where IPU experts provided a presentation on global parliamentary information technology responses to COVID-19 in September 2020. There were also good relations at virtual meetings and the virtual Governing Council, and in our regular daily work, the British Group continues to enjoy excellent relations at all levels and maintains a strong record of cooperation with the international Secretariat. The contact details for the Secretary General of the IPU are:

Mr Martin Chungong
Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
5, Chemin Du Pommier
Case Postale 330
CH-1218 Le Grand Saconnex
Geneva
SWITZERLAND

Telephone: +41 22 919 41 50 Fax: +41 22 919 41 60

E-Mail: postbox@mail.ipu.org

Website: www.ipu.org

National Groups of the IPU

As of November 2020 there are 179 Members and 13 Associate Members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Afghanistan	Comoros	Guyana
Albania	Congo	Haiti
Algeria	Costa Rica	Honduras
Andorra	Côte d'Ivoire	Hungary
Angola	Croatia	Iceland
Argentina	Cuba	India
Armenia	Cyprus	Indonesia
Australia	Czech Republic	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Austria	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Iraq
Azerbaijan	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Ireland
Bahrain	Denmark	Israel
Bangladesh	Djibouti	Italy
Belarus	Dominican Republic	Japan
Belgium	Ecuador	Jordan
Benin	Egypt	Kazakhstan
Bhutan	El Salvador	Kenya
Bolivia	Equatorial Guinea	Kuwait
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Estonia	Kyrgyzstan
Botswana	Eswatini	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Brazil	Ethiopia	Latvia
Bulgaria	Fiji	Lebanon
Burkina Faso	Finland	Lesotho
Burundi	France	Libya
Cambodia	Gabon	Liechtenstein
Cameroon	Gambia	Lithuania
Canada	Georgia	Luxembourg
Cape Verde	Germany	Madagascar
Central African Republic	Ghana	Malawi
Chad	Greece	Malaysia
Chile	Guatemala	Maldives
China	Guinea	Mali
Colombia	Guinea-Bissau	

Malta	Serbia	Uganda
Micronesia (Federated States of)	Seychelles	Ukraine
Marshall Islands	Sierra Leone	United Kingdom
Mauritania	Singapore	United Republic of Tanzania
Mauritius	Slovakia	Turkmenistan
Mexico	Republic of Korea	Tuvalu
Monaco	Republic of Moldova	Uruguay
Mongolia	Romania	Uzbekistan
Montenegro	Russian Federation	Vanuatu
Morocco	Rwanda	Venezuela
Mozambique	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	Viet Nam
Myanmar	Samoa	Yemen
Namibia	Sierra Leone	Zambia
Nepal	Singapore	Zimbabwe
Netherlands	Slovakia	
New Zealand	Slovenia	
Nicaragua	Somalia	
Niger	South Africa	
Nigeria	South Sudan	
North Macedonia	Spain	
Norway	Sri Lanka	
Oman	St Lucia	
Pakistan	Sudan	
Palau	Suriname	
Palestine	Sweden	
Panama	Switzerland	
Papua New Guinea	Syrian Arab Republic	
Paraguay	Tajikistan	
Peru	Thailand	
Philippines	United Arab Emirates	
Poland	Timor-Leste	
Portugal	Togo	
Qatar	Tonga	
San Marino	Trinidad & Tobago	
Sao Tome & Principe	Tunisia	
Saudi Arabia	Turkey	
Senegal		

Associate Members

Andean Parliament

Arab Parliament

Central American Parliament

East African Legislative Assembly

European Parliament

Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the
Commonwealth of Independent States

Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and
Monetary Union

Latin American and Caribbean Parliament

Parliament of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community

Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

Details of funding granted in support of All Party Parliamentary Group Activities in the period November 2019 to November 2020

Each year, BGIPU approves financial assistance to a range of All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) which apply for support.

APPGs eligible for BGIPU support consist of informal cross party groupings of parliamentarians from both Houses with an interest in the affairs of a specific country, including exchanges with parliamentary counterparts in that country. Funding for this activity is included within grant in aid received from the two Houses.

The approved budget for assistance to APPGs in 2019-20 was £30,000. For the Annual Report, the period of focus is between Annual General Meetings, rather than the Financial Years. Due to the global pandemic, all officially supported parliamentary travel was restricted by Speakers from mid- March 2020, requiring the suspension of all BGIPU funding support for APPGs.

Detail of support given since November 2019 until time of writing follows:

Georgia APPG

Assistance totalling £542.43 was provided to the Georgia APPG for a lunch with the Georgian Foreign Minister and members of the APPG in early March 2020.

THE SECRETARIAT OF THE BRITISH GROUP IPU

	Position	Commenced
Mr Rick Nimmo	Director	May 2012
Ms Dominique Rees MBE	Deputy Director	April 1998
Ms Alexandra Milsom	Finance & Administration Manager	January 2019
Ms Gabriella Liberotti- Harrison	Head of Multilateral Programme	July 2008
Ms Rhiannon Edwards	International Project Manager	September 2016
Ms Megan Black	International Project Manager	February 2019
Ms Fiona Burnet	International Project Manager	April 2019
Ms Lucy Nash	International Project Manager	August 2019



BGIPU Secretariat Team Meeting on 5 November 2020

**Contact details of the Secretariat of the British
Group IPU**

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