

ARAB PARLIAMENTARY BULLETIN

Quarterly newsletter published by UNDP's Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region (PDIAR) with the contribution of Arab parliaments and parliamentarians.

ISSUE 6
AUGUST 2010

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Arab Parliaments' News

*In the Spotlight:
Puff or Pattern?*

3 Anti-smoking Legislation
Spreads in the Arab
World

4 Arab Legislation

*In Focus:
e-Parliaments: A New
Step towards More
Transparent and Open
Arab Parliaments*

8 Parliamentary
Contribution:
Parliaments and Human
Rights: The Case
of Yemen

10 Knowledge Building

11 Global Parliamentary
Activities

13 Arab Elections

EDITORIAL

Over the past few decades, human rights managed to cross all national, political, economic and cultural borders to become universally acknowledged principles. Parliamentarians, as elected representatives of the people, play a key role in protecting and promoting these rights by ratifying international human rights conventions, harmonizing and passing national laws, and monitoring the implementation of relevant policies. Parliamentary institutions across the globe have mainstreamed human rights in their different committees; some have also established specialized committees to address human rights issues.

A key contribution submitted by MP Shawqi Al Qadhi, member of the Public Freedom and Human Rights Committee at the Yemeni House of Representatives, sheds lights on the role that parliamentarians can play in protecting human rights and underlines the importance of the collaboration between parliaments and civil society in raising awareness on human rights.

This issue of the Arab Parliamentary Bulletin (APB) further discusses the importance of parliamentary outreach to civil society, through highlighting the role of parliamentary websites, as a new method for communicating with citizens and CSOs, and a tool favoring more transparent and inclusive parliaments.

We continue to develop this bulletin encouraged by the valuable suggestions and contributions of ours readers. In this regard, a new section has been added to the Bulletin that provides the latest news on electoral laws and election results in the Arab region. Your support motivates us to pursue our efforts, and work together towards developing our Arab parliaments.

**WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT
OUR WEBSITE:
www.arabparliaments.org**

Arab Parliaments' News

2

Algeria

Parliamentary Day "Fighting Corruption: Visions and Mechanisms"

On 19 May 2010, Algeria's National People's Assembly hosted a parliamentary day organized by the parliamentary bloc, the Movement for the Society of Peace, on Fighting Corruption: Visions and Mechanisms. The participants weighed the topic from four different angles: Anti-corruption Mechanisms in National Legislation, Fighting Corruption in International Law, Fighting Corruption and Good Governance and Mechanisms to Fight Corruption. The participants also examined and discussed the anti-corruption law, and the role of parliament in fighting corruption.

Kuwait

Workshop on the "Constitution and Bylaws in the National Assembly"

In cooperation with the Training Department, the Media Department at the General Secretariat of the Kuwaiti National Assembly organized on 18-20 April 2010 a workshop addressed for parliamentary journalists entitled "The Constitution and the Bylaws in the National Assembly". The workshop aimed at building the parliamentary journalists' knowledge of the Constitution and bylaws, which largely contributes to their coverage of parliamentary activities, especially parliamentary sessions. The workshop intended to promote parliamentary and democratic culture among parliamentary

journalists represented by newspapers editors and reporters of TV channels.

Lebanon

Parliamentarians' Conference on Water in Arab Countries and the Region (Turkey-Iran)

In cooperation with the World Water Council and the Association of the Friends of Ibrahim Abdel-Aal and in the presence of Arab MPs and ambassadors, the Public Works, Transportation, Energy and Water Committee organized the Parliamentarians' Conference on Water in Arab Countries and the Region from 13 to 15 May 2010 in the Lebanese National Assembly. The participants addressed water policies and cooperation agreements on the first day and the inter-parliamentary consultative website, HELPDESK, on the second day. On the third day, a field trip was organized to the Litani Project to provide parliamentarians and international organizations with a closer look. The participants debated potential solutions to the water scarcity problem and the future demands in the Arab region, highlighting the crucial role of parliamentarians in resolving water conflicts and developing alternatives to water supply provided that they do not violate the countries' water rights.

In The Spotlight

PUFF OR PATTERN? ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION SPREADS IN THE ARAB WORLD

3

The negative effects of tobacco on health are no longer questioned. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco is the single greatest cause of preventable death worldwide¹. Continuous use leads to diseases affecting heart and lungs and exposes the individual – whether a smoker or passive smoker – to major risks of heart attacks, strokes and cancer. The WHO estimates that tobacco caused over 100 million deaths over the course of the 20th century².

This has prompted the WHO to create the “World No Tobacco Day” which has been observed around the world on May 31 every year since 1988. It is intended to encourage abstinence and to draw attention to the negative effects of tobacco on health. This global campaign proved fruitful since countries around the world are increasingly restricting or even banning smoking in public places, making tobacco consumption difficult for smokers, thus protecting them and second-hand smokers alike.

Arab countries have joined this worldwide campaign and are introducing smoke bans and/or restrictions in public places. Parliaments and rulers across the region are intensifying their campaign against public smoking by imposing anti-smoking legislation.

Laws implementing such bans or restrictions have been adopted across the region in a stepped-up campaign against public smoking.

In 2008, the Moroccan House of Representatives unanimously adopted a law banning smoking in public places and prohibiting the sale of cigarettes



to minors as well as advertisements by the tobacco industry. A year later, a Presidential decree in Syria outlawed smoking in public and closed spaces. The restrictions include water pipes and other types of smoke with fines potentially exceeding USD2,000.

In the Gulf region, Doha, the capital-city of Qatar, was the first to embark on anti-smoking efforts by banning public smoking in 2002. The law also banned tobacco advertisements and imposed heavy fines on violators. Bahrain followed suit in 2008, while the United Arab Emirates recently joined the campaign and is expected to start implementing a federal ban in all indoor public

spaces by the end of this year after individual emirates have adopted similar restrictions at the local level. The ban will not, however, apply to Shisha cafes although they will be subject to stricter regulations. Saudi Arabia, after encouraging a smoke-free Hajj campaign last year,

4

has recently imposed a ban in all the Kingdom's airports and their facilities but has yet to ban smoking in all public or closed areas.

In August 2009, anti-smoking legislation was proposed in the Iraqi parliament. And in Jordan, the Ministry of Health launched a nationwide campaign to ensure that the Public Health Law, which came into effect in May 2010, is being respected. The law prohibits smoking in public places and selling cigarettes to minors and subjects violators to fines and/or prison terms of up to one month. Even in Lebanon, with one of the highest smoking rates in the world, parliamentarians are currently debating a draft law intended to ban smoking in indoor public spaces and put an end to advertising and sponsorship by cigarettes companies.

While parliaments may not have been at the forefront of this campaign in each of these countries, elsewhere in the region they could spearhead the debate and join in the anti-smoking efforts. Civil society can be a precious ally in this regard and is already playing an active role in raising public awareness and encouraging the adoption of anti-smoking legislation.

Reducing tobacco use could save many lives. Arab parliaments must be aware of their role in protecting the lives of their citizens and should be more active in addressing this issue.

1. www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/mpower_report_full_2008.pdf
2. http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/mpower_report_prevalence_data_2008.pdf

Arab Legislation

Jordan

Temporary Election Law Adopted in Jordan

On 18 May 2010, Jordan's cabinet endorsed a **temporary election law** that will govern the parliamentary elections scheduled for 9 November 2010. The newly elected parliament will then replace the one dissolved in November 2009.

Lebanon

Draft Law on Protection of Whistle-Blowers



On 24 June 2010, a press conference was organized in the National Assembly to announce the **Draft Law on the Protection of Whistle-Blowers**, which was signed and officially submitted by a number of MPs from Arab Parliamentarians Against Corruption. Remarks on the draft Anti-Corruption Law in the Public Sector were made in the presence of the Minister of Economy and Trade, MPs, representatives of the journalists' syndicate, as well as civil society and international organizations.

In Focus

e-PARLIAMENTS: A NEW STEP TOWARDS MORE TRANSPARENT AND OPEN ARAB PARLIAMENTS

5

Parliaments have been striving over the past few years to become more transparent, open, and accessible to the public. To this end, they have developed their websites as a key tool in expanding their outreach and making their work known to citizens who are thus provided with more and easily accessible information on the parliaments' representative, legislative and oversight role.

Parliamentary websites have evolved over the years from a static medium that provides basic information to a more interactive forum for dialogue that fosters parliament's inclusiveness by engaging different segments of society. MPs are now more dependent on parliamentary websites to receive agendas, obtain copies of proposed legislation, and get plenary and committee reports in a faster, more efficient way.

This article provides a glimpse of the global status of parliamentary websites and attempts to look deeper into how Arab parliamentary websites are doing and the impact they can have on strengthening parliamentary life in the region¹.

Global Overview

Many parliaments and international organizations have strived to promote e-parliaments. A survey conducted by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament in 2009² showed that 97% of parliaments reported having websites, while the remaining 3% were planning one³.

As showed the survey, the vast majority of websites provided general information on the parliament, such as a brief history, bio-data of the speakers, updated list of MPs, overview of the

parliament's composition and functions, basic information on parliamentary committees and commissions, and a list of all the parties represented in parliament. Most websites provided information on plenary sessions such as documentation produced from current and previous years; almost half of the websites offered audio or video webcast of the plenary meetings.

As for the legislative process, most websites provided a basic description of the legislative function, posting the texts and status of all proposed laws. Around half of them provided links to documentation on the proposed legislation and a searchable database of enacted legislation as well as the current and previously proposed ones. The oversight function was the least highlighted, with the information available on almost one third of the parliamentary websites including a summary and the status of oversight activities, oversight documentation from current and previous years, and a searchable database of documentation related to oversight activities. The national budget was another area that received less attention, with around one third of websites providing explanation of the budget and the public finance process, information on documentation related to the budget from previous years, status of parliamentary review of the proposed public finance activities, and documentation from parliamentary bodies that review public finance.

The Arab Region

Arab parliaments took a huge step forward in developing their websites over the past few years. Twenty seven of the thirty three Arab

parliamentary chambers currently have a website, and one website is currently under construction. A survey of the Arab parliamentary websites⁴, conducted by UNDP's Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region, reflected a trend similar to the global level. While the majority of websites provided general

performance and involvement in parliamentary work.

• *Parliamentary Committees*

More than 80% of websites provided basic information about parliamentary committees including the committee structure (82%), list of

6

information about the parliament, basic documents and committees' news, information on the legislation, oversight and budget was not extensive. Below are some of the key findings of this survey.

• *General Information*

All websites provided general information on the parliament. All 27 chambers posted basic documents (such as bylaws and constitutions), 89% provided a brief history, 85% published the speaker's biography, 96% presented information on the structure, role and activities of the parliamentary bureau, and 93% allowed access to the parliamentary library.

All websites provided an updated list of MPs, while 44% provided bio-data of MPs. 48% of websites included information on the political parties represented in parliament and the composition of parliamentary blocs, while only 11% provided direct information on women representation in the parliament. It is worth noting that 63% of websites provided special services to MPs such as webmail and access to specific reports and documents.

• *Plenary*

Most websites provided comprehensive information on the plenary sessions, with 82% posting the schedule, agenda and reports of the plenary meetings. Some websites (22%) recently added audio or video webcasts of plenary sessions and other parliamentary events. A couple of websites have recently rolled out other innovative services, such as an attendance record for MPs and a detailed account of their activities, thus allowing citizens to monitor their MPs'

members and coverage of committee activities (85%). However, only 56% of websites posted the committee reports, and 41% listed the laws sent to the committees.

• *Legislation*

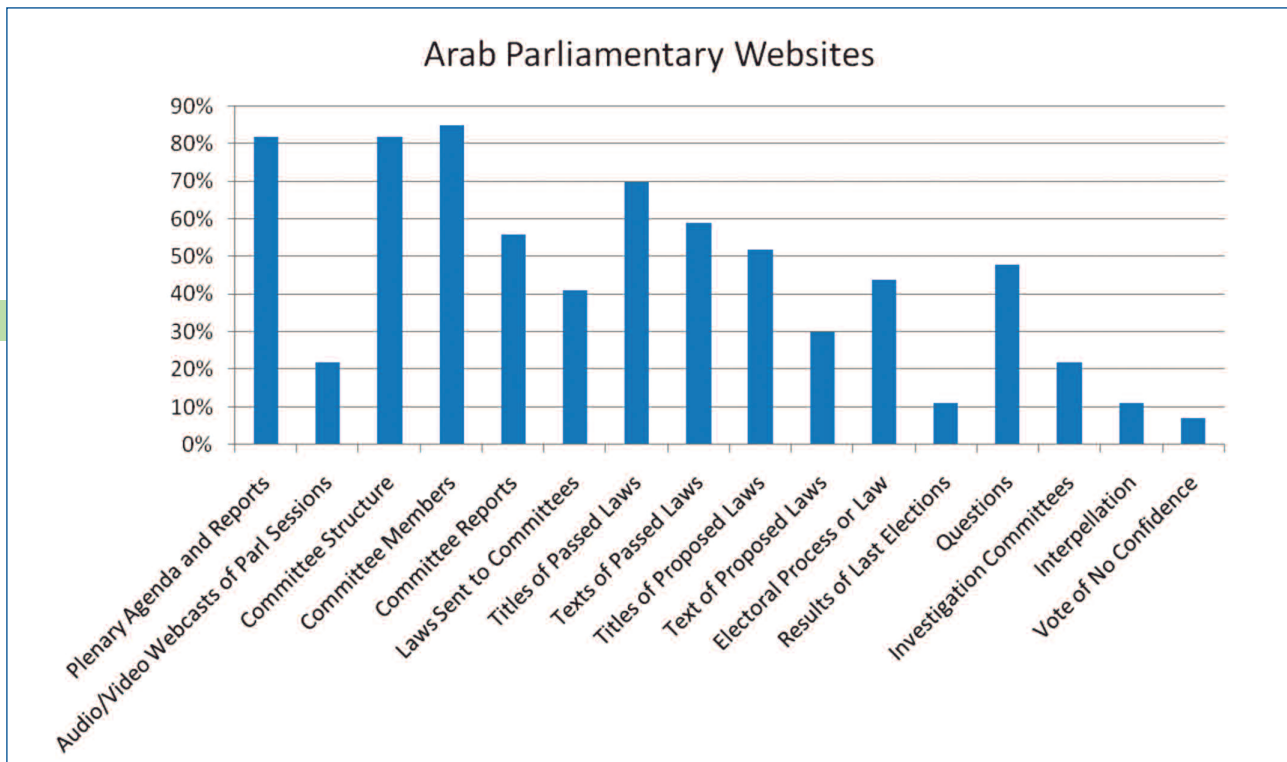
48% of websites provided a description of the legislative process. The majority of websites (70%) listed the titles of enacted laws, and 59% provided a searchable database of the laws (titles and texts). Recently, Arab parliamentary websites have been providing more information on the different phases of the legislative process, with 52% of websites listing the titles and status of the proposed legislation and 30% posting the text of the proposed legislation. A few websites introduced new features to make the legislative process more transparent and inclusive. Of these features are a forum that allows citizens to express their opinions on the proposed laws and links to documents relevant to the proposed legislation.

• *Elections*

A growing number of websites shares information on elections, with 44% providing a description of the electoral process or links to the electoral law. A few websites (11%) post the results of the last elections.

• *Oversight and Budget*

Oversight and budget were the least highlighted topics on Arab parliamentary websites. 30% of websites provided a description of the oversight function. Information was also provided on parliamentary questions (48%), investigation committees (22%), interpellation (11%), and vote of no confidence (4%). Only 7% of websites



provided information on the budget process or posted links to the annual budget. A couple of websites presented new features in this area, with one website posting the minutes of the parliamentary discussion of the budget, and another links to the final accounts of the budget.

Challenges and Opportunities

Arab parliamentary websites are receiving increasing attention as an important means of communication between the parliament and the people it represents. Parliaments still face many challenges in optimizing the use of this new media tool. The obstacles are both technical (limited computer literacy and access to technology and internet) and cultural (freedom of information, parliamentary traditions).

A major leap has been made over the past few years to enrich the websites' content. Efforts are also underway to make websites more dynamic through forums that involve citizens in the different parliamentary functions. We hope that this trend will continue in favor of more open, transparent and democratic Arab parliaments.

References:

- United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, World e-Parliament Report 2008, [New York]: United Nations, 2008.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, Guidelines for the Content and Structure of Parliamentary Web Sites, [Geneva]: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, Guidelines for Parliamentary Web Sites, [Geneva]: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009.

1. This article does not provide a technical assessment of the website but sticks to the information posted for public made accessible to the public.

2. United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, [World e-Parliament Report 2010](#).

3. Responses to the survey were received from 132 parliamentary chambers from 109 countries (including several Arab countries), as well as two regional legislative bodies in Europe and Africa.

4. The survey mapped the information posted on the 27 Arab parliamentary websites. Fields that were still under construction or being updated were also accounted for.

Parliamentary Contribution

PARLIAMENTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE CASE OF YEMEN

8

MP Shawqi Al Qadhi
Member of the Public Liberties and
Human Rights Committee at the Yemeni
House of Representatives



Abiding by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen upholds the principle of rights and freedom. Article 6 thereof stipulates, "The Republic of Yemen confirms its adherence to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the Arab League, and the generally recognized principles of international law."

The Constitution highlights the rights and public freedoms guaranteed to the Yemenis. These include the right to a peaceful transfer of power through elections (Art. 4); the right to elect and nominate oneself as a candidate in an election (Art. 43); equal opportunities for all citizens in the political, economic, social and cultural fields (Art. 24); freedom of scientific research and achievements in the fields of

literature, arts and culture (Art. 27); the right to education, health and social services (Art. 32); equality in rights and duties (Art. 41); freedom of thought, opinion and speech (Art. 42); the right to innocence until proven guilty (Art. 47); personal freedom, dignity and security (Art. 48); the right to health care and social security (Art. 55-56); freedom of movement (Art. 57); the right and freedom to form political and professional associations and trade unions as well as other rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Laws were also adopted to protect rights and freedoms though some in my opinion added some unnecessary restraints on them.

In this respect, the Parliament plays a crucial role in its capacity as the legislative authority that regulates rights and freedoms and monitors the executive authority's compliance with the relevant laws, both in text and spirit, as per Article 62 of the Constitution, which states, "The House of Representatives is the legislative authority of the state. It shall enact laws, sanction general state policies and the general socio-economic development plan and approve state budget and final accounts. It shall also oversee the activities of the Executive Authority as stipulated in this constitution."

As such, the Yemeni House of Representatives bylaws established the Public Liberties and Human Rights Committee to review draft laws and conventions on public freedoms and human rights, ensure follow-up, review and protection of all relevant aspects pursuant to

the Constitution and enacted laws, and monitor all stakeholders to ensure respect of relevant laws (Art. 49). The Standing Orders also provided for the establishment of another committee, the Petitions and Complaints Committee, to examine complaints and petitions filed and transferred to the parliament, present a report on the subject matter to the Speaker or his representative, including the Committee's suggestions and opinions regarding the complaint or petition, and ensure follow-up of stakeholders in charge of implementing the suggestions and recommendations of the parliament or the Speaker (Art. 48).

The legislative and institutional efforts to protect these rights and freedoms are explicit, whether self-motivated, externally guided or linked to conditions and agendas set by donors. However, researchers, activists and observers are increasingly asking several questions: Did the Yemeni House achieve any progress in promoting rights and freedoms since its creation after the union of Yemen was proclaimed on 22 May 1990? Did the two committees fulfil their role as per the Constitution and Standing Orders? Does the citizen refer to these two Committees to achieve justice and fairness?

To answer these questions, one must bear in mind that the House's activities to promote rights and freedoms are twofold, related as they are to legislation and oversight.

Despite several legislation-related challenges, activists worked hard, prompting the parliament to ratify human rights treaties and harmonize national laws for a better implementation of these conventions.

The adoption of the Law for AIDS Prevention and Protection of the Rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) is a source of pride for us and one fruitful experience at the personal



level. With the support of the United Nations Development Program, we formed a group of 10 MPs and organized two workshops in Cairo and Khartoum to provide participants with a more detailed outlook on the disease. MPs listened to an explanation of AIDS and its causes and met with selected PLWH, who talked about their suffering and the social stigma — which only adds up to their suffering or is rather the bitter part of their suffering. Back to Yemen, MPs were eager to draft a legislation protecting the rights of PLWH.

Despite the difficulties we encountered in our conservative society, which considers AIDS as a crime or a punishment unworthy of compassion, we succeeded in adopting the law. The time has come now to implement and disseminate it.

The parliament is also fulfilling its oversight function, as prison visits are organized, complaints received and social causes supported. However, the current political conditions are hindering these efforts with several MPs unaware that the political aspect must be separated from the promotion of rights.

Moreover, the culture of human rights is still in the making in our society, as CSOs strive, with much effort and limited resources, to ensure its respect. Public awareness of human rights and advocacy is still at a primitive stage. In the House of Representatives, some MPs, namely conservative MPs, are also sceptical about the human rights principles and values. Mounting poverty, unemployment and corruption sped up the deterioration of rights, making it difficult for the minority of human rights activists within the House to ensure follow-up of violations.

Yet, the efforts to promote human rights and public freedoms will continue. We largely rely on civil society organizations to engage MPs in their activities and programs to translate human rights concepts and causes into strategies within the parliament to be achieved by all.

Knowledge Building

World e-Parliament Report 2010

The United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union released the [World e-Parliament Report 2010](#). The Report, prepared by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, intends to help legislatures harness the potential benefits of ICT for their work and set key goals and priorities to take advantage of this valuable resource. While providing evidence of the complexities of e-parliament, the Report suggests ways to overcome some of the obstacles to the effective use of technology in parliamentary settings.

Islamist Mass Movements, External Actors and Political Change in the Arab World

This report, jointly published by IDEA, Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale-Italy, and Istituto Affari Internazionali-Italy, includes case studies on Islamist movements and parties in Egypt, Morocco, Palestine and Lebanon. It offers an in-depth analysis of the structures of such movements, particularly of the socio-economic interests they represent and the mobilization and political participation strategies they have adopted.

Global Parliamentary Activities

3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament



The Inter-Parliamentary Union convened the **3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament** in Geneva on 19-21 July 2010. The summit revolved around the broad theme of *Parliaments in a World of Crisis: Securing Global Democratic Accountability for the Common Good*. Two panel discussions focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and strengthening trust between parliament and the people.

The meeting provided an opportunity to review reports on the progress achieved since the 2005 Speakers Conference in meeting the MDGs, building global standards for democratic parliaments, and strengthening the IPU's relation with the UN. The report on the Sixth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament was also presented during the conference.

Sixth Annual Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament

Organized by the IPU and the Swiss Parliament in Bern on 16-17 July 2010, the meeting focused on the

challenges of achieving gender equality and more specifically meeting Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 on child survival and maternal health. The participating Speakers pledged to place the achievement of the MDG goals 4 and 5 high on their parliaments' agenda.



Towards Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery in West Africa

With the financial support of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the presence of 60 representatives of 13 parliaments from the region, the ECOWAS Parliament, key international and regional organizations, civil society organizations, and practitioners, UNDP hosted a regional seminar titled "Towards Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery in West Africa" in Accra (Ghana) on 27-29 June 2010. The participants underlined the importance of strengthening the parliamentary institution as a major crisis prevention tool, highlighting during their discussions and in their recommendations, the need to build the capacities of MPs in crisis prevention and recovery and the importance of mainstreaming a conflict sensitive approach to the drafting of

legislation and review of existing laws, among others.

Third Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

The Inter-Parliamentary Union organized a parliamentary meeting on [The Role of Legislators in Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation](#) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 29 May 2010. The meeting, which was attended by MPs from around 20 countries and three regional parliamentary organizations, presented an opportunity to review the progress achieved in implementing the IPU Bali Resolution of 2007 on peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among religious communities in a globalized world. It also examined how parliaments can more pro-actively pursue the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Parliamentarians from Latin America adopt strategies to eliminate violence against women

In cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the National Assembly of Ecuador organized a seminar on 29 April 2010 to discuss strategies to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women. Parliamentarians from 9 Latin American countries were present at the meeting at the end of which they adopted a list of recommendations for concrete parliamentary action to ensure the implementation of legislation on violence against women. The recommendations dealt with issues such as acknowledging new forms of violence against women, repealing laws that discriminate

against women, adopting measures to promote men's participation in violence eradication efforts, analyzing budgets from a gender perspective, providing budgetary allocations, in particular to secure the coordination and proper training of all those concerned with curbing this form of violence, strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and reinforcing partnerships with civil society, international organizations, the media and private-sector stakeholders to develop policies and programs for the prevention and eradication of violence against women.



Arab Elections

2010 Elections of the Sudanese National Assembly

For the first time in 25 years, pluralistic, multi-party elections were staged in Sudan from 11 to 15 April 2010. These elections were the first to be held after the signature of the [Comprehensive Peace Agreement \(CPA\)](#) between the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan on 9 January 2005 in Nairobi, putting an end to the Civil War that pitted Northern Sudan against Southern Sudan in 1983. These elections were also unique in the sense that they witnessed competition for seats in the legislative and executive authorities, across the nation, in Southern Sudan and in each state. The President of the Republic, the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, State governors, the Sudanese National Assembly, the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly and State assemblies were elected.

Type of elections	Elections
Executive elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of the Republic of the Sudan • President of the Government of Southern Sudan • State Governors
Legislative elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Assembly • Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly • State Assemblies

These elections were held in accordance with the [2008 National Elections Act](#) adopted by the National Assembly on 7 July 2008 and signed by the President on 14 July 2008. The new law established the [National Elections Commission \(NEC\)](#), an independent body with exclusive authority to manage all election-related issues. For the first time in Sudan's history, the law



adopted a mixed system of both proportional representation and individual geographic constituencies at a percentage of 40% for the former and 60% for the latter as follows:

- 60% of members shall be elected to represent geographical constituencies at the level of the state concerned;
- 25% of women shall be elected on the basis of proportional representation at the state level from separate and closed party lists;
- 15% of members shall be elected on the basis of proportional representation at the state level from separate and closed party lists.

The law provided for a 25% women quota in the National Assembly based on separate women lists. Under the law, any party shall obtain a minimum of 5% of votes to enter the National Assembly. In addition to the elections of the National Assembly, the law also regulated the election of the President of the Republic of the Sudan, the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, State Governors, Council of States, and State assemblies. The voting process was complicated with voters having to fill 8 electoral ballots in the North and 12 in the South.

840 international and Arab observers and thousands of local observers monitored the elections in most states,

<i>Elections</i>		<i>Electoral system</i>		
		Majority system		Proportional system
		Majority	Proportional	
President of the Republic		√		
President of the Government of Southern Sudan		√		
Governors			√	
The National Assembly	Geographical Constituency		√	
	Party List			√
	Women List			√
Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly	Geographical Constituency		√	
	Party List			√
	Women List			√
State legislative assemblies	Geographical Constituency		√	
	Party List			√
	Women List			√

Source: [Website of the National Elections Commission \(NEC\)](#)

especially in Southern Sudan. Around 16 million registered voters had to choose from 14,000 candidates competing for around 2,000 executive and legislative seats. In the elections of the National Assembly, 533 candidates of whom 431 were party members and 102 were independent candidates contested 450 seats. 323 women candidates competed on women lists, while 237 candidates ran on party lists. A number of Sudanese opposition parties boycotted the elections questioning their credibility.

Women in elections

Pursuant to the National Elections Act of 2008, women shall be allocated 25% of the total number of seats in the National Assembly, i.e. 112 seats out of 450. Women issues occupied center stage in the electoral campaigns, ranging from political participation, decision-making to women's role in economic development. Candidates pledged to promote the status of women at all levels. Women won 112 seats out of 450 in the Sudanese National Assembly, i.e. around 25.9%. For the first time in Sudan's history, a woman candidate (from the Sudanese Democratic Socialist Union Party) ran for the presidential elections and garnered 30,526 votes.

Elections results

The ruling Sudanese National Congress won 312 seats out of 450 in the National Assembly. The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) obtained 99 seats. Seats were divided as follows:

National Congress Party (NCP)	312
Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)	99
The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	4
Popular Congress	4
Independents	3
The Federal Umma Party	3
Umma Party Reform and Renewal	2
Popular Movement – Democratic Change	2
Unionist Democratic Party	1
The National Umma Party	1
Muslim Brotherhood Party	1
Vacant seats	18
Total	450

It is worth noting that some opposition parties ended up contesting the electoral results after having taken part in the elections.

At the beginning of its first parliamentary session, the elected National Assembly held on 24 May 2010 an oath-taking procedural session. Ahmad Ibrahim

Turnout was estimated at 30.8% in the first round of elections and at 14% in the second round.

Election results

The ruling National Democratic Party won 80, i.e. more than 90%, of the 88 seats. Independents won 4 seats. The remaining four seats went to small opposition

Al-Taher, candidate of the National Congress party, was elected Speaker, while Adam Hamed Moussa was elected President of the Council of States.

The Sudanese National Assembly will face several challenges, namely the self-determination referendum for Southern Sudan scheduled for January 2011. The referendum could see the emergence of a new State with the secession of Southern Sudan.

[Results of the Elections of the President of the Republic](#)
[Results of the Elections of the National Assembly](#)
[Results of the Elections of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan](#)

Web sources:

[Al-Jazeera](#)
[Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#)
[National Elections Commission \(NEC\)](#)
[Arab Election Watch](#)

Mid-term Elections of the Egypt's Shura Council

The mid-term elections of Egypt's Shura Council were held on 1 June 2010, with run-off elections staged on 8 June. The President of the Republic appoints one-third (88 members) of the 264 members, while half of the remaining two-thirds (88 seats) is elected every three years during the Council's six-year term.

115 candidates ran for the elections representing 13 political parties, while 331 candidates were independent. Only 11 women took part in the electoral race. A total of 446 candidates competed for 74 seats in 55 constituencies in 27 Egyptian provinces. 14 candidates won uncontested.

parties, namely the Progressive National Progressive Unionist Party, the Tomorrow Party, the Democratic Generation Party, and the Arab Democratic Nasserist Party. The Muslim Brotherhood, the largest opposition force, failed to win any seat. Results came as follows:

	First round	Second round	Total
National Democratic Party	74	6	80
Tomorrow Party	1	0	1
Arab Democratic Nasserist Party	1	0	1
The National Progressive Unionist Party	1	0	1
Democratic Generation Party	1	0	1
Independents	0	4	4
Independents (Muslim Brotherhood)	0	0	0
Total	78	10	88

During a session held on 4 June 2010, Safwat El-Sherif was unanimously elected as Speaker of the Shura Council, garnering all 260 votes in favor, in the absence of 4 members.

Temporary Election Law Adopted in Jordan

On 18 May 2010, Jordan's cabinet endorsed a [temporary election law](#) that will govern the parliamentary elections scheduled for 9 November 2010. The newly elected parliament will then replace the one dissolved in November 2009. The new law maintained the one-person-one-vote system under which a voter is allowed to choose only one candidate. This system has been widely criticized for producing tribal lawmakers with narrow local affiliations.

The new law raised the number of seats by 10, from 110 to 120, and doubled women's quota from 6 to 12, thus increasing their representation in parliament to 9%. Of the four remaining seats, two were allocated to the

capital Amman and one each to the cities of Zarqa (middle) and Irbid (North). The new law divided the country into electoral districts and sub-districts, with one seat for each sub-district.

Our Activities

Strengthening the Oversight Function of Arab Parliaments: Guidelines to Improving the Legal Framework

Second Regional Meeting of the Working Group on Strengthening the Oversight Function of Arab Parliaments, 18-19 June 2010, Rabat-Morocco

Within the framework of the Working Group on Strengthening the Oversight Function of Arab Parliaments, PDIAR organized the second regional meeting of the working group titled "Strengthening the Oversight Function of Arab Parliaments: Guidelines to Improving the Legal Framework" in partnership with the Arab Parliamentary Union and in cooperation with the Moroccan House of Representatives. The meeting, attended by more than 60 MPs, Secretaries-General, experts and practitioners from 15 Arab countries, aimed at building consensus on the General Principles for Reforming the Legal Framework towards Strengthening the Oversight Function of Arab Parliaments.

A comparative study, prepared by PDIAR's team, focused on the mechanisms and conditions stipulated in the parliamentary bylaws and constitutions that regulate parliamentary oversight in most Arab countries. The study allowed the participants to develop their knowledge of the legal framework governing the oversight function and provided a basis for further discussion and elaboration of the draft General Principles.

General Principles for Reforming the Legal Framework towards Strengthening the Oversight Function of Arab Parliaments

The General Principles consists of two parts. The



first part provides an overview of the evolution of parliamentary life as well as the political and constitutional status of parliaments with a special focus on the oversight function of parliaments. The second part presents the general principles, and the suggested conditions and mechanisms that can strengthen the oversight role of Arab MPs.

Following two days of intensive deliberations, the participants reached consensus on the general principles as a set of regional standards that can encourage and guide efforts towards strengthening parliamentary oversight in the Arab region.

The Initiative

The Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region (PDIAR) is a joint project launched by UNDP's Global Programme on Parliamentary Strengthening (GPPS) and the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR), with the support of the Belgian government to address the increasing demand for parliamentary assistance in the Arab Region. It builds on recent activities, findings, and lessons learned, and aims at promoting democratic governance through enhancing the role, capacity and image of the legislative institutions in the Arab countries and supporting the work of their members and administrations.

You can contact us on: sara.salman@undp.org