

Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia



Australian Parliamentary Delegation

**118th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
in Cape Town, South Africa**

(12-19 April 2008)

and a

Bilateral visit to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

(20-26 April 2008)

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PREFACE

Membership of the Delegation

Leader	Mr Harry Jenkins, MP Speaker of the House of Representatives Australian Labour Party Member for Scullin
Deputy Leader	The Hon. Danna Vale, MP Liberal Party of Australia Member for Hughes
Members	Ms Jill Hall, MP Australian Labour Party Member for Shortland The Hon. Roger Price, MP Australian Labour Party Member for Chifley Mr Patrick Secker, MP Liberal Party of Australia Member for Barker

The Delegation was accompanied by, Mr Neil Bessell, Secretary to the Delegation, Department of the Senate, Ms Debra Biggs, Advisor to the Speaker, Ms Alison Purnell, Adviser, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (IPU only) and Federal Agent Michael Jackson (Jordan only). Mrs Michele Jenkins, Mr Bob Vale, Mr Lindsay Hall, and Mrs Robyn Price also travelled with the delegation.

Briefings and assistance

The delegation received a comprehensive and informative briefing from officers of DFAT and the Parliamentary Library on its visit to Jordan.

In relation to the IPU, DFAT and other agencies provided comments on the draft resolutions to be considered by the IPU standing committees. The delegation thanks Ms Alison Purnell and her colleagues at DFAT and other agencies for providing this useful advice. The delegation also recognises the advice and support of Ms Purnell during the IPU Assembly in Cape Town.

The delegation also thanks Ms Fiona Way, Parliamentary Relations Office, for her invaluable administrative support and assistance, the staff at HRG Travel and Mr Tony Styles, Finance Section, Department of the Senate.

Part One



118th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Chapter 1

Inter-Parliamentary Union

IPU Council and Assembly

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organisation that brings together representatives of the Parliaments of sovereign states.

At its Assemblies, which are held twice a year, members of national delegations participate in the following:

- the Assembly itself, being a focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue on political, economic, social and cultural issues of international significance;
- the Inter-Parliamentary Council, comprising three delegates from each affiliated group; and
- specialist committees established by the IPU and specific meetings such as the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and the Committee on Middle East Questions.

A 17-member Executive Committee administers the Union and supervises its annual program and budget.

Geo-political meetings

The recently amended rules of the IPU specifically recognise the role and function of the geo-political groups. These groups are as follows: Africa, Arab, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia, Latin America and the Twelve Plus.

The Australian delegation participates in the meetings of the Twelve Plus Group (the geo-political group centred originally on European Union membership but now including several other countries) and also the Asia-Pacific Group. In accordance with the new rules, the Australian Group has resolved that it will seek election to any position in the IPU, including participation on drafting committees and specifically the Executive Committee of the IPU, under the auspices of the Asia-Pacific group.

Nevertheless, the delegation attends and participates actively in the work of the Twelve Plus Group.

The meetings of the Twelve Plus and Asia-Pacific foster multilateral contact and provide the delegation with an important opportunity to put its point of view in a relatively informal atmosphere, and to cement friendships with other countries.

Membership of the Union

The 150 members of the IPU are as follows:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

There are 8 associate members, namely:

Andean Parliament, Central American Parliament, East African Legislative Assembly, European Parliament, Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Latin American Parliament, Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Delegation report

This report is based on the official *Results of Proceedings of the IPU Meeting in Cape Town - 2008* produced by the IPU Secretariat.

Acknowledgements

The delegation records its sincere appreciation of Ms Rebecca Barton, Second Secretary, Australian High Commission, Pretoria for the assistance she provided to the delegation in Cape Town.

The delegation also records its thanks to Ms Alison Purnell, Director, Ministerial and Parliamentary Branch, DFAT for her assistance and advice on substantive issues considered by the Assembly.

Highlights of the work of the Australian Delegation at the IPU Assembly

The Speaker participated in the General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world, under the theme of *Pushing back the frontiers of poverty*.

Mr Secker participated in the debate in the First Committee (Peace and International Security) on *The role of parliaments in striking a balance between national security, human security and individual freedoms, and in averting the threat to democracy*.

The delegation lodged a proposal that, at the 120th Assembly in 2009, the First Committee consider the following matter: *Advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and securing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: The role of parliaments*. This proposal, which was also supported by Japan, the United Kingdom and Zambia was adopted by the Committee and subsequently endorsed by the Assembly.

Mr Price, along with Mr J Mwiimbu of Zambia, was appointed as co-rapporteur for this item and will draft a report and resolution for consideration at the 120th Assembly.

Mrs Vale participated in the debate in the Second Committee (Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade) on *Parliamentary oversight of State policies on foreign aid*. Mrs Vale was elected to the drafting committee of the Second Committee to finalise the resolution on this item for adoption by the IPU Assembly. She was elected rapporteur of the drafting committee and presented its report and resolution to the Assembly.

Ms Hall participated in the debate in the Third Committee (Democracy and Human Rights) on *Migrant workers, people trafficking, xenophobia and human rights*.

Mr Price was elected to the drafting committee of the Third Committee to finalise the resolution on this item for adoption by the IPU Assembly.

The delegation lodged a reservation on the final resolution adopted by the Assembly on *Migrant workers, people trafficking, xenophobia and human rights*.

Ms Hall and Mrs Vale attended the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians.

The delegation participated in a roll-call vote on the inclusion of the following emergency item on the agenda of the Assembly: *The role of parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in ensuring an immediate halt to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in conflict areas and its environmental dimension, in facilitating the Palestinians' right to self-determination - particularly by ending the blockade in Gaza - and in accelerating the creation of a Palestinian state through viable peace processes*.

The delegation welcomed the Declaration on the situation in Zimbabwe made by the President of the Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa.

Ms Hall was nominated by the Asia-Pacific geopolitical group and subsequently elected as a titular member of the Co-ordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians and attended its meeting.

Ms Hall along with 14 other members of various parliaments from different IPU geopolitical groups took part in a field visit organised by UNICEF, visiting two HIV/AIDS and child support programs conducted in Cape Town.

Members of the delegation attended all meetings of the 12+ geopolitical group.

Members of the delegation attended the two meetings of the Asia-Pacific geo-political group, including a meeting to reform the practices and procedures of the group.

The Speaker and Mrs Vale met with Ms Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa.

Members of the delegation attended panel discussions on *Peace building towards reconciliation* and *Maternal, newborn and child health*

Members of the delegation attended the presentation of the findings of *Countdown to 2015: The 2008 Report* and UNICEF's report, *State of the World's Children 2008*.

Members of the delegation attended discussions on *The Global economic meltdown and its impact on the building of a better world for all*.

The delegation held bilateral discussions with delegations from Japan, Iraq, Indonesia and Timor-Leste. At these meetings, the delegation commended Australia's candidature for a seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2013-14.

The delegation received a briefing from officers of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation.

Members of the delegation attended official ceremonies and social functions.

Chapter 2

118th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Inaugural ceremony

The 118th IPU Assembly was inaugurated on 13 April 2008 at a ceremony held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, in the presence of His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki.

Inaugural addresses were delivered by Ms. Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, and Ms. Katri Komi (Finland), acting President of the IPU Executive Committee. The ceremony concluded with a statement by the President of the Republic, who declared the 118th IPU Assembly officially open.

Election of the President of the Assembly (Agenda item 1)

The 118th IPU Assembly¹ opened at the Cape Town International Convention Centre in Cape Town, South Africa, on the morning of Monday, 14 April 2008, with the election by acclamation of Ms. B. Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa, as President of the Assembly. The President said that she was honoured to have been elected to preside over the Assembly's work and thanked the Governing Council for having nominated her, adding that this was a great honour, not only for her personally but also for her country. She asked the Assembly to observe a minute of silence to honour the memory of several political leaders killed in recent months as a result of political violence.

Guest Speakers

After opening the general debate on the overall theme of *Pushing back the frontiers of poverty*, the President introduced the two keynote speakers, Ms. Y. Fall, Senior Economist at the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and Mr. D. Payne, United States Congressman and Chairman of the House Sub-Committee on Africa and Global Health.

Ms. Y. Fall said that poverty was a complex topic and a great challenge. It was women worldwide who bore the brunt of and were responsible for dealing with the consequences of food, water and other shortages. At no time in history had so many resources been available to end poverty, and although some countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America were experiencing growth, millions of people were not benefiting. Fighting poverty was a partnership and required justice and global governance. She urged the Assembly to view poverty as the responsibility of parliaments as well as governments. Fighting poverty involved fighting inequality and upholding the rights of individuals.

Mr. D. Payne said that he was grateful for the opportunity to address the Assembly and conveyed the good wishes of Ms. N. Pelosi, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, for a successful meeting. Three billion people were living on less than two dollars a day; the rich were getting richer and the poor becoming more impoverished. The richest 20 per cent accounted for three quarters of world income. Children were the most vulnerable to poverty, disease and hunger, and this contributed to instability worldwide.

He expressed the hope that a world with so much wealth would distribute its riches more equitably and stressed the responsibility of parliamentarians in attaining this goal. The IPU's work in that cause was most helpful. The Millennium Challenge Act, adopted by the United States in 1993, was tailored to recipient countries' direct needs. Moreover, it had set aside several million dollars in its appropriations bill after Archbishop D. Tutu had urged it to increase its support for the fight against drug-resistant tuberculosis. Free trade must serve to increase market access to products from African nations; subsidies must be reduced and the capacity of African farmers increased.

On Tuesday, 15 April, the Assembly heard addresses by HRH Prince of Orange, Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, Chair of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB); and Mr. V. Moosa, President of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

HRH Prince Willem-Alexander recalled that ten years ago the IPU had adopted a resolution on water and the means required to make the best use of that resource for sustainable development. UNSGAB had been set up to work on the same issue. Seven thousand five hundred people were still dying every day because they lacked access to clean water and sanitation. African ministers had made concrete commitments on sanitation and hygiene, but awareness-raising was still required so that issues relating to water and sanitation remained on the local, national and international agenda. There was still a long way to go. Even if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were achieved, more than one billion people would still have no access to basic sanitation.

In 1998, the IPU had passed a resolution urging governments to provide better water and sanitation, and he suggested that it build on the resolution by promoting cooperation on transnational river system and watercourse management and by helping to reduce the administrative burden of donating aid. The United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Trans-boundary Watercourses and International Lakes had not been ratified by a sufficient number of States, despite its importance. He was confident that the challenges could be met by working together.

Mr. V. Moosa said that all parliamentarians should ask themselves whether they were enacting the legislation required to prevent climate change. The impact of global warming was already being felt, and by 2020, according to the 2007 Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, between 75 and 250 million people in Africa would suffer water shortages as a result of climate change. Twenty million people could already be called "environmental refugees", and two hundred million could be displaced by 2015. The rural poor, including many indigenous peoples, were

particularly affected by declining access to natural resources. Their elected representatives had to legislate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, it was accurate to say that many parliaments had abdicated their responsibility in this area. He called on them to hold governments to account and assume responsibility.

In the afternoon, Dr. F. Songane, Director of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, which was cooperating with the Countdown to 2015, addressed the Assembly and recalled that the MDGs set various targets to be reached by 2015; he would concentrate on Goals 4 and 5, which related to women and children.

Countdown to 2015: The 2008 Report, which was launched on 16 April, tracked the progress of 68 developing countries that accounted for 97 per cent of maternal and child deaths; these countries were mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

The Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2007 showed that progress was slow on Goal 5, relating to women's health and that only 16 of the 68 countries were on track to meet Goal 4, relating to child health. Eighty-two per cent of those countries had high or very high maternal mortality rates. That should not be the case: pregnancy was not a disease and deaths in childbirth were inhumane and needed urgent attention. Present funding levels were insufficient to maintain progress in health systems, which should give priority to three areas: ensuring universal availability of proven health activities, adopting a life-cycle approach, and leadership. It was in respect of leadership that IPU Member Parliaments had a substantial role to play. He invited delegates to attend the joint special session with Countdown to 2015 in the afternoon of 17 April. Members of the Australian delegation attended this joint session.

Participation

Delegations from the parliaments of the following 130 countries took part in the work of the Assembly:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Madagascar, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan,

Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The following Associate Members also took part in the Assembly: the Andean Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Latin American Parliament, and the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Observers included representatives of:

(i) Palestine;

(ii) the United Nations system: United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO);

(iii) the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the League of Arab States;

(iv) the African Parliamentary Union (APU), the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), the Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU), the Association of Senates, Shoura and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA), the Confederation of Parliaments of the Americas (COPA), the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), the Maghreb Consultative Council, the Pan-African Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of the Collective Security Treaty (OSCT), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and the Russian Federation, the Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of Islamic Conference Members (PUOICM), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum, the Transitional Arab Parliament (TAP); and

(v) Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Delegations from the parliaments of Malawi, Swaziland and the United States of America participated as observers with a view to considering future affiliation. International IDEA, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime were invited to follow the work of the Assembly as observers in the light of the items on the agenda.

Of the 1,467 delegates who attended the Assembly, 700 were members of national parliaments. The parliamentarians included 51 presiding officers, 42 deputy presiding officers and 196 women (28 per cent).

Choice of an emergency item (Agenda item 2)

Before turning to the proposals for an emergency item, the President of the Assembly referred to the concern expressed by many delegations regarding the situation that had arisen in Zimbabwe due to the fact that the results of the recent elections had not yet been released in their entirety over two weeks after the people of Zimbabwe had cast their votes. This matter had been discussed in the Steering Committee, which had recommended that a declaration be prepared and read out to the Assembly for its endorsement. The Assembly approved this suggestion.

The President announced that the Assembly had before it six proposals for an emergency item. Following consultation, the delegations of Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa withdrew their original proposals and submitted a new one entitled *The role of parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in ensuring an immediate halt to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in conflict areas, in facilitating the Palestinians' right to self-determination, particularly by ending the blockade in Gaza and in accelerating the creation of a Palestinian State through viable peace processes.*

Ms. E. Papadimitriou (Greece) announced that she would be willing to withdraw the Greek delegation's proposal in favour of the proposal from Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa, on the understanding that the co-sponsors would introduce an environmental dimension.

Mr. J. Bernal (Colombia) said that he was ready to withdraw the proposal submitted by the Venezuelan delegation with the support of Latin American and Caribbean countries, on the understanding that the situation of Colombia would be covered by the proposal submitted by Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa.

Mr. O. Dulic (Serbia), after explaining the reasons behind the Serbian delegation's proposal, announced that he was willing to withdraw it.

Mr. J. Carter (New Zealand) said that he would withdraw his delegation's proposal after having heard that the Assembly Steering Committee had approved a proposal that a declaration be issued on behalf of all delegates on the subject of the elections in Zimbabwe and that a small working group would be set up to draft it. Mr. B. Thioubé (Senegal) announced that his delegation would withdraw its proposal in favour of the one submitted by the delegations of Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa. The President of the Assembly noted that all other proposals had been withdrawn, leaving only that submitted by the delegations of Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa. She invited Mr. Z. Madasa (South Africa) to present it. After Mr. Madasa had spoken, Mr. S. Shalom (Israel) expressed his delegation's opposition to the proposed emergency item. He regretted having to do so, but considered the item to be unacceptable and unbalanced, and deplored the fact that

nobody had seen it fit to consult with the delegation of Israel on the proposal. In response to the requests of the delegations of Greece and Venezuela, and after hearing the views of several other delegations and recalling the provisions of the IPU Statutes, the Secretary General suggested that the words "and their environmental dimension" be inserted after "conflict areas" in the title of the emergency item, and that the text of the resolution refer to the need to reach a humanitarian agreement in areas of conflict but not mention any specific country.

On 14 April, the proposal, its title amended to *The role of parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in ensuring an immediate halt to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in conflict areas and its environmental dimension, in facilitating the Palestinians' right to self-determination – particularly by ending the blockade in Gaza - and in accelerating the creation of a Palestinian State through viable peace processes*, was submitted to a vote and included in the agenda of the 118th Assembly. The roll-call vote on the emergency item appears at Appendix 1.

Debates and decisions of the Assembly and its Standing Committees

This section of report outlines the contribution made by members of the delegation to debates and decisions of the IPU.

General Debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world (Agenda item 3)

The general debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world, under the theme of *Pushing back the frontiers of poverty*, took place in the mornings and afternoons of 14, 15, and 17 April. A total of 106 speakers from 98 delegations, including the Speaker, Mr Jenkins, took part in the debate, which was chaired by the President of the Assembly. During the sittings, the President invited various Vice-Presidents, who were members of the delegations of Austria, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gabon, Lebanon, Mexico, Namibia, Pakistan, Sweden, Thailand and Uruguay, to replace her in the chair.

First Standing Committee on Peace and International Security (Agenda item 4)

The role of parliaments in striking a balance between national security, human security and individual freedoms, and in averting the threat to democracy

The Committee held three sittings on 14 and 16 April, with Mr. T. Boa (Côte d'Ivoire), President, in the chair. In addition to reports and a preliminary draft resolution prepared by the co-Rapporteurs, Mr. L.M. Suklabaidya (India), Ms. H. Mgabadeli (South Africa) and Lord Morris of Aberavon (United Kingdom), the Committee had before it amendments and sub-amendments to the draft resolution submitted by the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Bahrain, Canada, China, Congo, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Romania, South Africa, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland and Venezuela.

The first sitting began with the presentation of the individual reports and the joint preliminary draft resolution by the three co-Rapporteurs. A total of 56 speakers from 42 parliaments, including Mr Secker, and two international organisations took the floor during the debate, after which the Standing Committee appointed a draft committee composed of representatives from Belgium, Canada, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Mexico, Syria and Turkey. The three co-Rapporteurs were invited to participate in the work of the drafting committee in an advisory capacity.

The drafting committee met in the afternoon of 14 April. It appointed Mr. P. Moriau (Belgium) as its president and Mr. J.D. Seelam (India) as its rapporteur. It examined 116 amendments and sub-amendments submitted by 24 delegations, and adopted 38 of them in full or in part. A number of other amendments were accepted, if not in letter, then in spirit, as many were similar in content to the initial draft or to other amendments that had been adopted.

The First Standing Committee considered the consolidated draft on the afternoon of 16 April. Several delegations took the floor, seeking clarification of or expressing support for the text. The Committee adopted the draft resolution by acclamation and requested that the drafting committee rapporteur present it to the Assembly. The draft resolution was submitted to the plenary sitting of the Assembly in the afternoon of 18 April and adopted unanimously. The text of the final resolution appears at Appendix 2.

The Bureau of the First Standing Committee met on 16 April with Mr. T. Boa (Côte d'Ivoire), President, in the chair. It examined proposals submitted by IPU Members for the item to be debated by the First Standing Committee at the 120th Assembly. The Bureau approved the subject item proposed by the Australian delegation and co-sponsored by the Japan, the United Kingdom and Zambia *Advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and securing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: The role of parliaments*, which it subsequently submitted to the First Standing Committee. The Committee agreed to propose that subject item to the Assembly for inclusion in the agenda of the 120th Assembly. The Assembly subsequently approved that item and appointed Mr. Roger Price (Australia) and Mr. J.J. Mwiimbu (Zambia) as co-Rapporteurs.

Second Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade (Agenda item 5)

Parliamentary oversight of State policies on foreign aid

The Committee held two sittings on 15 and 17 April, with its President, Mr. P. Martin-Lalande (France), in the chair. In addition to a report and a preliminary draft resolution prepared by the co-Rapporteurs, Mr. F.-X. de Donnea (Belgium) and Mr. P.B. Quenum (Benin), the Committee had before it amendments to the draft resolution submitted by the delegations of Algeria, Armenia, Canada, China, Cuba, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, Philippines, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Sweden, and Venezuela.

A total of 45 speakers from 40 countries, including Mrs Vale, and one international organisation took the floor during the plenary debate, following which the Standing Committee appointed a drafting committee composed of representatives from Argentina, Australia, Cameroon, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Panama, Republic of Korea, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

The drafting committee met in the morning of 16 April. It appointed Ms. N. Schimming-Chase (Namibia) as its president and Ms. D. Vale (Australia) as its rapporteur. The committee examined 80 amendments to the preliminary draft resolution and adopted 35 of them either fully or in part. A number of other amendments were accepted, if not in letter, then in spirit, as many were similar in content to those that were adopted. The amended draft was adopted by the drafting committee by consensus.

On the morning of 17 April, the Second Standing Committee considered the consolidated draft and adopted it unanimously, without making any further changes.

The draft resolution was submitted to the Assembly, which met in plenary in the afternoon of 18 April, and was adopted unanimously. The text of the resolution appears at Appendix 3.

The Bureau of the Second Standing Committee met on 16 April with the Committee's President, Mr. P. Martin-Lalande, in the chair. It examined proposals submitted by IPU Members for the items to be debated by the Second Standing Committee at the 120th Assembly. The Bureau approved the subject item *Climate change, sustainable development models, and renewable energies*, which it subsequently submitted to the Second Standing Committee. The Committee agreed to propose that subject item to the Assembly for its inclusion in the agenda of the 120th Assembly and nominated Mr.H.-J. Füchtel (Germany) and Mr. A. Lins (Brazil) as co-Rapporteurs for that item. The item and the co-Rapporteurs were subsequently approved by the Assembly.

Third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights (Agenda item 6)

Migrant workers, people trafficking, xenophobia and human rights

The Committee held three sittings, on 14, 15 and 17 April, with its First Vice-President, Mr. Y. Zhumabayev (Kazakhstan), in the chair. It had before it a report and a preliminary draft resolution drawn up by the co-Rapporteurs, Mr. C. Camacho (Mexico) and Mr. A. Dismore (United Kingdom), along with amendments to the draft resolution submitted by the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Canada, China, Cuba, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, South Africa, United Kingdom, Venezuela and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians. It also heard a presentation on the draft Handbook for Parliamentarians on Trafficking in Persons by Ms. R. Putonen of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In all, 44 speakers took part in the debate, including Ms Hall, after which the Committee designated a drafting committee composed of representatives of Algeria, Mr Price from Australia, Bahrain, Congo, Costa Rica, Egypt, Germany, Pakistan,

Peru, Switzerland and Turkey. The drafting committee met on 16 April. It appointed Mr. J.P. Winkler (Germany) as its president and Ms. D. Stump (Switzerland) as its rapporteur. It considered the draft resolution in detail and incorporated some of the amendments proposed.

On 17 April, the Third Committee considered the consolidated text of the draft resolution presented by the drafting committee and adopted it unanimously. The Assembly, meeting in plenary on 18 April, adopted the resolution by consensus. The delegation of Australia subsequently expressed a reservation in respect of operative paragraph 25. Australia was not in favour of banning political parties because transparent democratic processes and a robust institutional framework ensure an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and racially offensive behaviour. The text of the resolution appears at Appendix 4.

The Bureau of the Third Standing Committee met on 16 April with the Committee's First Vice-President in the chair. It examined proposals submitted by IPU Members to be debated by the Committee at the 120th Assembly. At its sitting on 17 April, the Third Standing Committee decided to place the subject item *Freedom of expression and the right to information* on the agenda of the 120th Assembly. It also appointed Mr. K. Malaisamy (India) and Mr. A. Dismore (United Kingdom) as co-Rapporteurs. The item and the proposed co-Rapporteurs were subsequently approved by the Assembly. Lastly, the Third Committee elected Mr. D. Cánepa (Uruguay) as its President.

Emergency item (Agenda item 8)

The role of parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in ensuring an immediate halt to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in conflict areas and its environmental dimension, in facilitating the Palestinians' right to self-determination - particularly by ending the blockade in Gaza - and in accelerating the creation of a Palestinian state through viable peace processes

The Assembly referred the emergency item it had adopted on 14 April to a drafting committee composed of representatives of Algeria, Belgium, China, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Morocco, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Venezuela. The drafting committee appointed Mr. S.J. Njikelana (South Africa) as its president and Mr. G. Versnick (Belgium) as its rapporteur. It met on 15 and 16 April, and drafted a resolution that was adopted unanimously by the Assembly on 18 April. The text of the resolution appears at Appendix 5.

Declaration on the situation in Zimbabwe

At the closing sitting, the President of the Assembly read out the declaration on the situation in Zimbabwe, which had been prepared by a working group set up by the President and composed of delegates from Botswana, Egypt, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom and Uruguay. The Assembly endorsed the statement by acclamation. The text of this declaration appears at Appendix 6.

Chapter 3

182nd Session of the Governing Council

Agenda

Membership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

At its sitting on 14 April, the Governing Council approved a request for affiliation from the parliaments of Iraq, Mauritania and Timor-Leste. At its sitting on 18 April, it approved a request for affiliation from the National Assembly of Lesotho and suspended the membership of the Parliament of Bangladesh, which is no longer functioning.

The IPU currently comprises 150 Member Parliaments. The Council welcomed the return of the Parliament of Thailand to full participation in the activities of the IPU, and reinstated the membership of the Parliament of Guinea, which had expeditiously defrayed its arrears. The Council also approved a request for associate membership from the Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), bringing the number of Associate Members to eight.

The Executive Committee had debated a request from Palestine for full membership, and concluded that for such a request to be met, it would be necessary to amend the IPU Statutes. On its recommendation, the Council decided to take the necessary steps to admit the Parliament of Palestine as a Member of the IPU and to that end, instructed the Executive Committee to meet in extraordinary session to prepare an amendment to the IPU Statutes and circulate it to the Members in time for its adoption at the 119th Assembly.

The Governing Council also approved a request for observer status from Human Rights Watch.

Financial results for 2006

The Governing Council considered the Annual Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for 2007. The Financial Statements showed that the IPU had an operating surplus of CHF 168 940 in 2007, bringing the balance of the Working Capital Fund to CHF 5 796 103. Revenues for the year included the full payment of arrears by the Parliament of Jamaica, a former member.

The internal auditors, Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) and Mr. R. Khan (India), reported that they were satisfied with the financial performance of the IPU in 2007 and with the presentation of the Financial Statements. For the future, they recommended that budget estimates should be more realistic, asked for more detailed gender and environmental analysis of expenditures in financial reports, and encouraged Members to be more timely in the payment of their contributions.

On the recommendation of the internal auditors, the Governing Council took note of the write-off of arrears of two suspended Members and of accounts receivable from the European Commission and approved the Financial Statements, the transfer of the operating surplus to the Working Capital Fund, and the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU in 2007.

Members of the delegation noted these accounting procedures and intend to seek further clarification of them from Mr John Porter, the IPU's Chief Financial Officer.

Financial situation

The Governing Council was given an overview of the IPU's financial situation at the end of the first quarter of 2008. The global financial crisis had had a significant impact on asset values, expenditures and revenues. In particular, the pension liability associated with the closed staff pension fund had increased. The overall impact of the crisis was negative but manageable.

The Secretary General informed the Governing Council about recent fund-raising activities and announced the conclusion of substantial grant agreements with Irish Aid and Canada's CIDA in support of gender equality, reconciliation and representation of minorities.

Cooperation with the United Nations

The Governing Council took stock of recent developments in IPU-United Nations cooperation, considered reports on a variety of United Nations related activities and approved a calendar of forthcoming initiatives and meetings as follows:

The Council was provided with an overview of some of the main activities taking place at United Nations Headquarters in New York that are of particular importance to parliaments and the IPU. The Council endorsed the recommendation that members of parliament from the relevant select committees join their national delegations to the forthcoming UN high-level debates in New York on HIV/AIDS (9-11 June 2008), Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (early September 2008) and the mid-term review of the Millennium Development Goals (23 September 2008). The Council also approved a meeting for MPs attending the Second Global Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in Doha, Qatar, from 29 November to 2 December 2008.

The Council noted the preparations underway for the 2008 General Assembly debate on cooperation between the United Nations and IPU and the negotiating process on the related UN General Assembly resolution. Member Parliaments were encouraged to follow the process closely, consult with their respective foreign ministries to help ensure a favourable outcome in the form of a strong, substantive and forward-looking resolution on cooperation between the two world bodies.

The Governing Council noted the evolving relationship with the new Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), as part of the mandate outlined in the 2006 General Assembly resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. The

Council encouraged an active IPU role in the DCF Stakeholders' Forum, which will be meeting for the first time in Rome in June 2008. This, together with the resolution adopted at the Cape Town Assembly on Parliamentary oversight of State policies on foreign aid, will constitute the parliamentary contribution to the first substantive session of the DCF, when it meets in New York in July this year, on the occasion of the 2008 session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The Council was informed of the new Memorandum of Understanding signed between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the IPU in November 2007. The new Agreement focuses on activities undertaken by both organizations to strengthen parliaments as "institutions of democratic governance". It proposes strengthened cooperation between the two bodies in relation to technical expertise, parliamentary strengthening programmes, standards, economic governance and poverty reduction, political representation, implementation of international conventions, and iKNOW politics. IPU Member Parliaments were encouraged to make use of the possibilities afforded by this new cooperation framework, with a view to obtaining assistance from UNDP working together with the IPU.

The Council heard a brief presentation of the newly released World e-Parliament Report 2008. This report, produced jointly by the IPU and the United Nations and drawing on the experience of 105 parliamentary chambers, is the first effort of its kind to establish a baseline of how parliaments are using information and communication technologies (ICT) in their work. The Council took note of the recommendations of the Report, which describe in detail what needs to be done in parliament in order to make the most effective use of ICT, and to this end undertook to work closely with the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

The Council heard the report of the second meeting of the Advisory Group of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs (November 2007) and approved the proposals submitted by the Executive Committee regarding the future work and functioning of the Committee on UN Affairs and its Advisory Group. The Council also approved a proposal for members of the Advisory Group to undertake a first field mission later in the year, to assess the implementation of the UN plans for greater system-wide coherence and enhanced aid effectiveness known as "Delivering as One". In this process, the Group will be working closely with the parliament of the pilot country in which the mission will be undertaken.

International Day of Democracy

The Governing Council noted that the United Nations had instituted an International Day of Democracy, to be celebrated on 15 September each year, and it approved proposals for the IPU and parliaments to mark the International Day.

Policies to reduce maternal, newborn and child deaths in developing countries

The Governing Council heard a report on the joint special session of the IPU and Countdown to 2015 held on 17 April to discuss parliamentary action to reduce

preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths in developing countries. The Council endorsed the proposal of the special session that the IPU, with the support of Countdown to 2015, mobilise and assist parliaments in the countries concerned over the next 12 months to take action to reduce child and maternal mortality and report on progress to the 120th IPU Assembly in Addis Ababa

Amendments to the Statutes and Rules

On 13 April, the Governing Council adopted amendments to the Rules of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, with a view to extending from two to four years, non-renewable, the term of office of the elected members of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, and renewing half of its membership every two years in order to facilitate continuity in its work and to enable new regional representatives to benefit from the experience of remaining members. To that effect, Rules 31.1(c), 31.2, 32.1 and 32.4 of the Rules of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, and Rules 4.1 and 4.3 of the Rules of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians were amended.

The Council also had before it a set of amendments to the Financial Regulations arising from the recommendations of the internal auditors for the 2006 accounts. On 13 April, the Council unanimously adopted the amendments, as follows:

- to Rule 5.1 and Rule 6.3 to redefine the sources of financing for the General Fund and the Working Capital Fund in order for all income to be reported appropriately in the income statement;
- to Rule 4.9 to place a ceiling on transfers of appropriations between budgetary headings without the prior approval of the Executive Committee; and
- to Rule 6.5 to update descriptions for trust funds and special accounts which are set up to handle donor funds with restrictions or other money held in trust.

The Council also approved a proposal for new working modalities of the International Humanitarian Law Committee and the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS.

Recent specialized conferences and meetings

The Governing Council took note of the results of the Seminar on Migration: The human rights perspective (see www.ipu.org/splze/hrbodies07.htm), the Regional conference for women parliamentarians of the GCC States (see www.ipu.org/splze-abudhabi07.htm), the Preparatory meeting of parliamentarians dealing with employment issues on the eve of the ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization (see www.ipu.org/splze-lisbon07.pdf), the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, Reinforcing the Rule of Law in International Relations: The Key Role of Parliaments (see www.ipu.org/splze-unga07.htm), the Regional Capacity-building Seminar for Asian Parliaments on Sustainable Development (see <http://www.ipu.org/splze-lao07.htm>), the First Global Parliamentary Meeting on HIV/AIDS (see www.ipu.org/splze-haids07.htm), the Regional Seminar for parliaments in southern Africa on security sector reform (see www.ipu.org/splze-luanda08.htm), the Meeting of parliamentary bodies dealing with the status of

women and gender equality (see www.ipu.org/splze/gender07.htm), the Parliamentary Forum to Fight Human Trafficking (see www.ipu.org/splze/vienna08.htm), the Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (see www.ipu.org/splze/csw08.htm), the Regional Seminar for Latin American Parliaments on the theme "Women shaping politics: gender, parliamentary representation and legislative agenda" (see www.ipu.org/splz-e/montevideo08.htm), and the Meeting to promote parliamentary input into the implementation of the 2001 Brussels Programme of Action (BPOA).

The Council heard an oral report on the Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament and noted that several parliaments, including the National Assembly of Pakistan, had expressed interest in hosting the next annual meeting.

Reports of plenary bodies and specialized committees

At its sitting on 18 April, the Governing Council took note of the reports on the activities of the following:

- Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and its Coordinating Committee;
- Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians;
- Committee on Middle East Questions;
- Group of Facilitators for Cyprus;
- Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, and
- Gender Partnership Group.

Future inter-parliamentary meetings

In addition to the meetings previously approved, the Council approved the Conference organised by the African Parliamentary Union in cooperation with the IPU on Africa and migration: Challenges, problems and solutions (Rabat, 22-24 May 2008), the Parliamentary session at the Stakeholder Forum on The role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness (Rome, 12-13 June), the Regional Seminar for English speaking Africa on reconciliation (Freetown, 23-25 June), the Panel discussion and briefing during the XVII International AIDS Conference (Mexico, 3-8 August), the Regional Seminar on Violence against Women (second half of 2008, at a venue to be decided), the Third Conference of Women Parliamentarians and Women in Decision-making Positions in the GCC States (second half of 2008, at a venue to be decided), the Meeting of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS (second half of 2008, at a venue to be decided), the Regional HIV/AIDS Training Seminar (second half of 2008, at a venue to be decided), IPU/ASGP/IFLA meeting on parliamentary information (Geneva, 16 October), the World e-Parliament Conference (Brussels, November 2008), and the Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the International Review Conference on Financing for Development (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008).

The Council approved the venue of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) for the 120th Assembly. It also considered a policy statement to cover the provision of visas and other matters

relating to the attendance of delegations at IPU Assemblies. At the request of several delegations which expressed the need for more time to consider the proposed policy, the Council decided to defer the matter to its next session. The Council noted that several parliaments, including those of Canada and Venezuela, had expressed an interest in hosting the 122nd Assembly, and asked the Secretary General to work with those parliaments with a view to developing concrete proposals that could be considered by the IPU's governing bodies at their session in October 2008 in Geneva.

Members of the delegation noted with concern that IPU rules do not allow a country to host an IPU Assembly if that country imposes and applies visas restrictions on certain nominated parliamentarians from Zimbabwe, in conformity with European Union and other international travel bans imposed on these individuals because of human rights abuses.

This of course happened in 2004 when the executive committee of the IPU concluded that the 110th Assembly could not be held in London and would need to be transferred to another venue. This was based on the view that the IPU functions on the premise that meetings of the organisation can only take place when all delegates freely designated by member parliaments are assured of receiving the required visa for participation. At that time the Australian delegation took the view that: parliamentarians from Zimbabwe who were not subject to international travel bans imposed because of human rights abuses would be able to attend the Assembly and that the IPU is an organisation founded on the principles of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Chapter 4

250th Session of the Executive Committee

Work of the Executive

The Executive Committee held its 250th session in Cape Town on 11, 12 and 17 April 2008. In the absence of the President and Vice-President, Ms. K. Komi (Finland) chaired the meetings. The following titular and substitute members took part in the session: Ms. Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria), Mr. G. Versnick (Belgium) substituted by Mr. F.-X. de Donnea on 12 April, Ms. J. Fotso (Cameroon, present on 17 April), Mr. J.A. Coloma (Chile), substituted on 17 April by Ms. M. Cristi, Mr. R. Pez Ferro (Cuba), substituting for Ms. K. Serrano Puig, Mr. T. Toga (Ethiopia), Mr. R. del Picchia (France), Ms. E. Papadimitriou (Greece), Mr. A. Toha (Indonesia), Mr. Yoo J.-K. (Republic of Korea), Mr. E. Ameskame (Morocco), substituting for Mr. A. Radi on 17 April, Mr. A. Kozlovskiy (Russian Federation), Ms. M. Xavier (Uruguay) and Mr. N. Anh Dzung (Viet Nam). Mr. M. Nago (Benin) was absent.

The Executive Committee discussed and made recommendations on agenda items to be addressed by the Governing Council. Much of its time was devoted to requests for affiliation, particularly that of the Parliament of Palestine. The other matters considered by the Committee are summarized below.

The Committee considered policy options for the IPU to offset its carbon footprint. In so doing, it looked at the broader issue of IPU policy in the sphere of environment, deciding that the matter merited further reflection and should be on the Committee's agenda in Geneva. It decided that the sum of CHF 50 000 to be allocated annually for offsetting the carbon footprint should not be transferred to an external organisation, as had been originally proposed, but should serve to fund IPU environmental projects. It also recommended the establishment of a small expert group of parliamentarians, who could advise on both the use to which the funds would be put and a broader environment policy for the Organisation.

The Committee broached the subject of a policy for people with disabilities and decided to defer its discussion on the matter to its next session.

The Committee received the management letter from the External Auditor and the management response. The Committee heard a report on the fiscal situation of certain staff members residing in France and noted that in 2007, the IPU had reimbursed CHF 34,000 in staff assessment to staff members to cover their tax bills. The Committee noted that the IPU was in close contact with the French IPU Group and was seeking a bilateral solution between the Swiss and the French authorities.

The acting President presented a written report on the performance of the closed staff pension fund in 2007. The report on staff movements in the Secretariat was adjourned to the October session, at which time the Committee proposed also to discuss the necessary steps to take for the appointment or re-appointment of a Secretary General.

Chapter 5

Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

Work of the meeting

The Thirteenth Meeting of Women Parliamentarians took place on 13 April 2008 and brought together 122 women and 26 men from the following national parliaments:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Congo, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Maldives, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Various Associate Members and observers were also represented, including the Pan African Parliament, UNICEF and UNHCR.

Ms Hall and Mrs Vale attended these meetings.

The Meeting was opened by the President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, Ms. M. Xavier (Uruguay), and began its work by electing Ms. G. Mahlangu-Nkabinde, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa, as its President. Ms. Mahlangu-Nkabinde's opening remarks were followed by statements by Ms. B. Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa, Ms. K. Komi (Finland), acting President of the IPU Executive Committee, and Mr. A.B. Johnsson, Secretary General of the IPU.

The Rapporteur of the Coordinating Committee, Ms.G. Gautier (France), briefly reported on the Committee's work at its previous three sessions. She paid tribute to the work accomplished by the outgoing Committee, which had reached the end of its term, and by Ms. Xavier.

The Meeting adopted the amendments to its Rules submitted by the Coordinating Committee. The amendments extend the term of office of Committee members from two to four years, and stipulate that half of the Committee's membership is to be renewed every two years.

Ms. M. Xavier briefed the Meeting on the work done by the Gender Partnership Group in Cape Town, which included monitoring the participation of women in

delegations to IPU Assemblies, examining the IPU budget from a gender perspective and monitoring the situation of parliaments without women members.

As its contribution to the 118th IPU Assembly, the Meeting considered the item of the Third Standing Committee, Migrant workers, people trafficking, xenophobia and human rights. The Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa, Ms. N.N. Mapisa-Nqakula, delivered a keynote address to launch the debate. The Meeting then divided into two groups, each of which discussed a subtopic of the item. It appointed Ms. Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria) and Ms. P. Cayetano (Philippines) as chairs, and Ms. S. Greiss (Egypt) and Ms. S. de Bethune (Belgium) as rapporteurs of the groups. Their reports were consolidated into proposed gender-related amendments and submitted to the Third Standing Committee at its first sitting. Some of the proposed amendments were adopted.

In the afternoon, the Meeting hosted the launch of the IPU survey, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*. Nearly 300 parliamentarians, both men and women, had taken part in the survey. The survey's main findings included the fact that women are making important contributions in parliaments and defining political priorities. The Meeting was encouraged to ensure that the survey's findings are disseminated to all parliaments and their members.

The Meeting's agenda also comprised a dialogue session between men and women on women and the media. The session was chaired by Ms. Z. Jaffer, a journalist from South Africa, and introduced by two panellists, Ms. D. Stump (Switzerland) and Ms. P. Govender (former member of parliament, South Africa). Having listened to several interesting statements, the Meeting noted that much more work needed to be done to tackle the stereotypical images of women presented in the mainstream media, which tended to reinforce gender inequality.

On Thursday, 17 April, the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians held a special sitting to elect the 24 regional representatives to the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians and its Bureau.

The Australian delegation was delighted that Ms Jill Hall, following her nomination by the Asia-Pacific Group, was elected as a titular member of the Co-ordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians.

The newly constituted Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians met on Friday, 18 April. It began preparations for its next meeting, stressing two priority areas: support for the United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence against Women and follow-up to the 2008 edition of the Countdown to 2015 Conference on maternal, newborn and child survival.

Chapter 6

Subsidiary committees and other activities

Introduction

During the Assembly, a number of subsidiary committees and other meetings and events took place. These are as follows:

- Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians;
- Committee on Middle East Questions;
- Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law;
- Gender Partnership Group; and
- Other meetings.

Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians held its 121st session from 13 to 17 April 2008. Ms. Z. Benarous (Algeria), Ms. S. Carstairs (Canada), Ms. R. Green (Mexico), Mr. P. Mahoux (Belgium) and Mr. A. Pimentel (Philippines) participated in their titular capacity, while Mr. K. Jalali (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Ms. A. Boumediene-Thiery (France) participated in their capacity as substitute members.

The Committee held 12 hearings with delegations from countries where it had cases pending, and five hearings with representatives of the sources, including one of the parliamentarians concerned.

The Committee examined a total of 70 cases in 35 countries and it submitted to the Governing Council 40 cases of 218 parliamentarians in 20 countries around the world

At the 119th Assembly in Geneva in October 2008, it is proposed to consult with the Secretary General and the Committee on the possibility of extending its mandate to include journalists.

As usual, the delegation includes the full report of the committee on the human rights of parliamentarians as Appendix 7.

Committee on Middle East Questions

The Committee on Middle East Questions met on 4 and 17 April. In the absence of the President, Mr. K. Sairaan (Mongolia), the meetings were chaired by Mr. J. Carter (New Zealand). The other titular members present were Ms. A. Clwyd (United Kingdom) and, on 17 April, Mr. H. Raidel (Germany). Mr. M. Shehab (Egypt) substituted for Mr. El-Feki. The substitute members present were Mr. L.H. Ishaq (Indonesia) and Mr. F.-X. de Donnea (Belgium).

Instead of its usual practice of convening a dialogue between the parties from the region, which they were not willing to attend, it used the meetings in Cape Town to discuss ways to improve its functioning. The Committee had been relatively inactive for a certain time, and member attendance was extremely irregular. It therefore decided that members who failed to attend for more than two consecutive sessions should be asked to cede their places to other candidates who were able to vouch for their expertise in the subject of the Middle East, and their availability to attend all of the sessions. The procedure would be to notify the leader of the geopolitical group concerned, who would bring the matter to the attention of the Group and request nominations to replace the original member.

The Committee noted that the geographical representation on the Committee was uneven, and proposed that all the principal geographical regions should be represented, although the exact breakdown should not be defined under the rules so as to retain a degree of flexibility.

The Committee also decided to increase the pace of its activities by making visits to the region to monitor and report on the peace process, and promote dialogue between the two sides. If circumstances permitted, meetings could also be held with the representatives of Israel and Palestine at IPU Headquarters in Geneva. It proposed that an exploratory mission to the region to investigate avenues for dialogue be carried out by Ms. A. Clwyd and Mr. J. Carter.

Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) met on Wednesday, 16 April 2008. The sitting was chaired by Ms. B. Gadiant (Switzerland), who was also elected President of the Committee. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also attended and provided background information on various topics.

The Cape Town session was the first to be held by the newly elected Committee following adoption by the Governing Council on 14 April 2008 of new working modalities of the Committee. Under the new system, the Committee's mandate is to promote respect for IHL and refugee protection by monitoring ratification of relevant international instruments and their implementation at the national level, and to raise awareness in parliament of issues requiring parliamentary action. The Committee is composed of six titular members – one from each of the geopolitical groups at the IPU – and six substitute members. Each member is elected on an *ad personam* basis for a four-year period. The Committee reports to the Governing Council on its activities, which are monitored by the Executive Committee. The Committee discussed follow-up of the resolution adopted at the 115th Assembly (Geneva, 2006) on *Missing persons*. With a view to monitoring follow-up by Member Parliaments, the Committee discussed and approved the text of a questionnaire to be sent to Members on initiatives that they had taken and requested that the questionnaire be distributed to Members as soon as possible.

The Committee went on to discuss the outline of a future handbook for parliamentarians on missing persons. The handbook should serve as a tool to guide parliaments in their work to prevent disappearances, protect persons likely to go missing and assist the families of missing persons. The handbook would be informed by data and examples collected through the questionnaire. The Committee would be working closely with the ICRC on this project. The handbook should be finalised by early 2009.

The Committee recalled the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in December 2006. It encouraged members to promote signature and ratification of the Convention in their respective parliaments and to support speedy accession to it. Thus far, 72 States had signed and four had ratified it. The Convention will come into force once it is ratified by 20 States parties. The Representative of UNHCR informed the Committee of follow-up on the publication entitled *Nationality and Statelessness: A Handbook for Parliamentarians*, launched at the 113th Assembly (Geneva, 2005) by the IPU and UNHCR. The Handbook is available in 12 different languages and arrangements for its translation into several other languages were currently being made. The Committee invited all IPU Members to make use of the Handbook and to disseminate it as widely as possible. It drew attention to the number of possibilities that existed to work with UNHCR country offices on refugee protection and statelessness.

The Committee was briefed by UNHCR on recent developments related to nationality and statelessness. It welcomed the various initiatives taken in several Arab States, Nepal and Brazil, which have essentially resolved statelessness issues. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of refugees, which today stands at approximately 10 million persons worldwide. With regard to asylum and refugee protection, although many governments have lived up to their humanitarian responsibilities, asylum was facing serious challenges, particularly as a result of measures taken in the name of national security, the fight against terrorism and combating perceived illegal or irregular migration. The Committee held a discussion on issues related to international humanitarian law and refugee protection. Three specific themes were identified: internally displaced persons, the humanitarian aspect of migration, and cluster munitions. It was agreed that further discussion would be held on those themes at the Committee's next session in order to identify possible work that could be carried out by Member Parliaments and the IPU.

Lastly, the Committee discussed its working methods. It expressed concern that one meeting per year might not be sufficient to properly follow the various issues falling within its mandate. Members agreed to try and meet informally at the Geneva Assembly and, in the meantime, to communicate by e-mail throughout the year.

Group of Facilitators for Cyprus

On 15 April 2008, on behalf of the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus, Mr. F. Gutzwiller (Switzerland) arranged for a dialogue between the representatives of the Greek Cypriot political parties attending the Assembly as delegates of the House of

Representatives of Cyprus and representatives of the Turkish Cypriot political parties. It was not the first time that both sides met under the auspices of the IPU. Recent meetings had been held in Marrakech in 2002, in Manila in 2005, and in Nusa Dua, Bali, in 2007.

The meeting was attended by representatives of five political parties – three Greek Cypriot and two Turkish Cypriot parties. The Group worked in a spirit of dialogue and openness.

The parties are genuinely encouraged by the positive meeting recently held between the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. D. Christofias, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. M.A. Talat. The parties expressed their strong support for the leaders of the two communities and encouraged them to engage in substantive negotiations aimed at achieving a definitive solution for the unification of Cyprus based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation and political equality in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. The parties also expressed the hope that one common delegation representing the Federal Republic of Cyprus would participate in future IPU Assemblies.

Gender Partnership Group

The Gender Partnership Group held its 21st session on 11 April 2008. The participants were Mr. R. del Picchia (France), Ms. Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria), Mr. N. Anh Dzung (Viet Nam) and Ms. M. Xavier (Uruguay). Mr. R. del Picchia acted as moderator.

The Group examined the composition of delegations attending the 118th Assembly and compared it to previous IPU statutory meetings. As at 17 April 2008, 196 of the 700 delegates (28 per cent) attending the Assembly were women. This is one of the highest percentages ever reached, and the highest absolute number of women.

Of the 130 delegations attending the Assembly, 124 were composed of two delegates or more. Of those, 13 (10.5 per cent) were all-male, down from 16 per cent at the 117th Assembly. The all-male delegations were from the parliaments of Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovenia and Suriname. The delegations from Armenia and Italy were all-female.

The Group also discussed the gender sensitivity of the IPU's budget. It noted that the financial report for expenditure during 2007 met the criteria established in Manila (2005) and provided detailed information on gender-specific allocations in the budget, both in comparative and absolute terms. Mainstream budget allocations and expenditure still needed to be analysed from the gender perspective, however, and an expert would be hired to facilitate the development of specific indicators to that end.

The Group then examined the situation of parliaments with no women members. At 31 March 2008, seven out of 189 parliaments had no women members: the Federated States of Micronesia (single chamber), Nauru (single chamber), Palau (lower and upper chambers), Qatar (single chamber), Saudi Arabia (single chamber), the

Solomon Islands (single chamber) and Tuvalu (single chamber). Three of those parliaments were renewed in 2007. No noticeable progress had been made in the countries concerned, and the Group again noted the difficulty in obtaining information, especially from Pacific Island countries whose parliaments are not IPU Members. The Group discussed different strategies, including organising sub-regional meetings with leaders and working through the IPU geopolitical groups, and suggested that the focus be placed on the Pacific Island States.

The Group discussed the application of Article 23.2 of the IPU Statutes, which stipulates that at least three elected members of the Executive Committee must be women. It drew attention to the importance of respecting that Article in practice. As no specific mechanism existed to ensure enforcement, the Group strongly recommended that each geopolitical group with two or more seats on the Executive Committee have at least one representative of each sex.

Lastly, the Group welcomed and discussed the recently published IPU survey, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, and encouraged members to discuss the results in their parliaments. It encouraged IPU Members to use the survey questionnaire to assess the level of gender sensitivity of their own parliaments. The Group also welcomed the publication of the IPU-UN map on *Women in Politics: 2008* and invited Members to distribute it widely.

Panel Discussions

Panel discussion on Peace-building towards reconciliation.

A panel discussion on Peace-building towards Reconciliation was held in the afternoon of 16 April. The moderator and lead panelist was Dr. F. Ginwala, former Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa. The other panelists were Mr. Y. Agboyibo, member of parliament and former Prime Minister of Togo, and Dr. A. Adebajo, Executive Director, Centre for Conflict Resolution, South Africa.

The panel focused primarily on the African experience. Since the 1960s, over forty wars have taken place in Africa, causing ten million deaths and many more millions of refugees. The panellists stressed that conflict resolution is a long-term process that entails addressing the root causes and identifying durable solutions. Such solutions must include establishing a procedure for listening to the victims and respecting their dignity.

Women must be fully involved throughout the process. The panel underscored the necessity for the involvement of all parties to a conflict in the negotiations to establish peace and in the subsequent reconciliation process. Reconciliation processes were more likely to succeed in a democratic environment with a strong parliament.

It was emphasised that parliaments have a primary responsibility to ensure civilian control of the army and security forces. Through their oversight function, parliaments must ensure that peace agreements are fully implemented and that the necessary resources are provided through the national budget.

There was also a need to strengthen the political parties, which are often very weak. The panel highlighted the need to ensure respect for the outcome of elections by all parties to the conflict. Political leaders and parties have a particular responsibility to promote respect for the electoral process and its outcome.

The panel recognised the responsibility of the international community in promoting peace and reconciliation. The point was made that while conflicts tend to occur mainly in developing countries, developed countries also bear some responsibility for causing these conflicts and their constructive engagement is necessary to identify and implement lasting solutions.

The participants highlighted the importance of the UN Peace Building Commission and the Peace Building Fund, which needed to disburse funds rapidly to facilitate implementation of peace accords. Such funds should also be used to assist the parliaments of the countries concerned.

Panel discussion on maternal, newborn and child health

More than 26,000 children under the age of five die every day, mostly from preventable causes. In addition, half a million women die in pregnancy each year, most during childbirth or in the first few days post partum. For almost a decade, child and maternal health have failed to attract the attention, resources and political action they deserve. Improving child and maternal health requires the achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The challenge is formidable and requires political determination, resources and sound strategies on an unprecedented scale.

To meet these objectives, the IPU and UNICEF organised a panel discussion on Leading the change for maternal, newborn and child health. The panel was held on 16 April. It was opened by the Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa, Ms. B. Mbete, and chaired by Ms. N. Madlala-Routledge, a South African member of parliament. The panellists included Senator P. Cayetano (Philippines) and Mr. P. Salama, UNICEF Chief of Health. The keynote address was delivered by Ms. G. Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament.

The panel sparked great interest among parliamentarians, over 200 of whom participated. They underscored the need for political determination, pointing out that progress would be made much more quickly if the 44,000 parliamentarians around the world prioritised action in favour of maternal, newborn and child health. They also underscored the need to ensure access to a continuum of health care within strong national health systems.

This could be achieved by, for example, integrating essential services at the community level, strengthening training programmes and recruitment of medical staff, ensuring that women have access to information, and providing access to sound data on which to base policies and programmes. Furthermore, in order to make lasting progress, policymakers should not focus on health alone. Action was needed within a more comprehensive framework that included initiatives to address gender inequality,

change mentalities and tackle overall economic, educational, and social issues. The participants also highlighted the key role of parliamentarians in everything from developing and enforcing legislation to protect children and ensuring national budgets allocated adequate resources to using the power of parliamentary inquiry to hold governments to account.

The panel discussion provided an opportunity to present the findings of *Countdown to 2015: The 2008 Report*, which was launched in Cape Town on 16 April, and of the UNICEF report, *State of the World's Children 2008*.

Other activities

Members of the delegation attended the following session Joint special session of the IPU and Countdown to 2015 on reducing preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths The IPU and Countdown to 2015 held a special joint session on 17 April to mobilise members of parliaments attending the 118th Assembly in support of policies to reduce preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths in developing countries. The session brought together several hundred members of parliament, ministers and government officials, representatives of the scientific community, the United Nations system, international organizations and civil society bodies, and activists participating in Countdown to 2015, a collaborative effort by individuals and institutions to track progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 to reduce child and maternal mortality.

The session was opened by the Chairman of the Council of Provinces of South Africa, Mr. M. Mahlangu. The Most Rev. N. Ndungane, President of African Monitor, delivered a keynote address, after which Mr. R. Horton, editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*, provided a progress report on how far countries have come in meeting the two MDGs. Mr. R. Horton moderated a panel discussion in which the following panellists took part: Dr. C.W. Chan, President of the International Pediatric Association, Mr. A.B. Johnsson, Secretary General of the IPU; Ms. D. Mafubelu, Assistant Director-General of the WHO; Ms. S.N. Ssinabulya, a member of parliament from Uganda; Ms. A. Starrs, President of Family Care International; Mr. F.M. Vallersnes, a member of the Norwegian Parliament; and Mr. Y. Yatsu, a member of the Japanese Parliament.

The discussion focused on the responsibilities of parliamentarians to help reduce child and maternal mortality. Both the panellists and the audience provided numerous examples of the action taken by members of parliament to raise awareness and mobilise political will. Through contacts with citizens in their constituencies, enquiry missions, hearings in parliament, statements, submissions and committee debates, parliamentarians can ensure that parliament is well-informed and able to exercise its oversight and legislative functions. Parliaments influence government policy and have important constitutional responsibilities to monitor and oversee its implementation. As part of the process, they adopt new, or adapt existing, legislation, approve the budget and audit the accounts. The panel concluded by calling for members of parliament, particularly in the 68 countries that have not yet achieved the two MDGs, to make every effort to raise awareness in parliament and work towards achievement of these

goals. They were encouraged to work with ministers, the scientific community, the local offices of the relevant United Nations agencies and civil society organizations in their respective countries, who all offered their support. The IPU and Countdown to 2015 pledged to assist them in this effort. The special session encouraged the IPU to work closely with Countdown to 2015 and the parliaments of the countries concerned over the next twelve months and to report on progress to the 120th IPU Assembly.

Other meetings

UNICEF-IPU organised field trips on 15 April 2008 and 15 members of parliament were selected from the different IPU geopolitical groups to take part in the visits organised by UNICEF, building on a long-established tradition. Ms Jill Hall was one of the 15 parliamentarians selected to visit the following three program sites in the Western Cape: -

- mothers2mothers (m2m) – an educational, psychosocial mentoring and support organization. m2m complements already existing programmes aimed at preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. It identifies and trains HIV-positive mothers from the various communities who have recently given birth to healthy babies. The programme takes the women through a rigorous curriculum and returns them to maternity wards and clinics as "Mentor Mothers". These otherwise unemployed women create a cadre of healthcare professionals that the government would not ordinarily be able to afford. Mentor Mothers educate new mothers, supporting them as they face decisions that make the difference between illness and health.
- The Isibindi programme, - which aims to create a safe and caring community for children and youth at risk who have been rendered vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, especially those in child-headed households. The Isibindi programme provides support and care to children in their natural environment – their communities of origin, building on their own strengths. All children receive regular visits and are provided with services within a child rights framework.
- Mount View Primary School, -which implements the Safe and Caring Child Friendly School (CFS) model. This model enables programme educators to manage learning in the complex teaching environments they encounter. Children's needs are addressed at the school level, which is often the first port of call for identifying vulnerability. They receive support depending on their special, individual needs, which may include care-giving, referral for basic services and help with homework, among other needs.

The visits were followed by a de-briefing and feedback session with UNICEF, hosted by its Representative in South Africa, Mr. M. Kamau. The session aimed to highlight the role of parliamentarians in child protection.

Bilateral meetings

The delegation had very useful and constructive bilateral discussions with delegates from Iraq, on the situation in that country; Japan on Australia's IPU proposal on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; Indonesia on bilateral relations and the forthcoming election of the IPU president and Timor L'Este on its first participation in an IPU Assembly and also bilateral relations

The delegation noted that few Pacific countries attend the IPU and considers that the Australian National IPU Group should investigate ways to foster and extend this participation.

Reform of the Rules of the Asia Pacific Group (APG)

The Asia- Pacific Group considered proposed changes to its Rules of Procedure, based on deliberations of a working group convened by the delegation from Canada in Ottawa in March 2008. The aim of these proposed changes was to make the APG a more effective group within the IPU and in particular to allow it to;

- consult and respond in a timely manner to the requests that are made of the APG;
- establish more efficient and effective procedures relating to the chair and secretariat of the group;
- ensure that the APG's regional and geopolitical needs and concerns are taken into consideration; and
- develop and plan the APG work program.

Members of the Australian delegation participated in these considerations and proposed a number of amendments that were adopted by the group.

Chapter 7

Meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

Introduction

Mr Ian Harris, the Clerk of the House of Representatives, and Ms Claressa Surtees, Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives, attended the meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) held in conjunction with the deliberations of the 117th IPU Assembly in Geneva, from 8 to 10 October 2007, and of the 118th IPU Assembly in Cape Town, from 14 to 18 April 2008. Ms Surtees attended the meetings as the substitute of the Deputy Clerk of the House, Mr Bernard Wright. Mr Harris and Ms Surtees participated in the full range of proceedings of the ASGP, and Mr Harris attended some of the meetings of the Executive Committee. Mr Harris, together with his wife in Geneva, also attended the meetings of the Finno-Ugric group of the IPU.

1. Geneva—8 to 10 October 2007

Relations between the ASGP and the IPU

Mr Martin Chungong, Director of the Division for the Promotion of Democracy, IPU Secretariat, attended a meeting and led debate on recent activities of the IPU. He referred to the development of a guide, *Parliamentary Self-assessment Toolkit*, to enable parliaments to assess their performance against certain standards to achieve more democratic outcomes. He highlighted also recent assistance in many countries targeting activities such as, encouraging scrutiny of the executive's budget, strengthening of post conflict governance, post election implementation and supporting women members.

Consideration of parliamentary matters

The general meetings of the ASGP continued the format of selected general thematic debates. The chosen subjects were:

- New dimensions/developments in regional Parliaments in Africa: the Pan-African Parliament and regional Assemblies—roles and challenges; and
- Parliamentary proceedings for the expulsion and disciplining of members (a topic suggested by Australia).

Each subject was open to discussion and fully debated at the meeting. In addition, there was a short intervention on issues arising from contributions to a questionnaire about parliamentary legal, financial and administrative autonomy.

There were also presentations and discussions on specific parliamentary topics:

- Public broadcasting of Parliament, by the European Broadcasting Union;
- Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament, by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament foreshadowing a conference to follow the meetings in Geneva;
- Establishment of a permanent framework of dialogue between the members of the Senate of Burundi and their electorate;
- Advancement of public service programs of the Korean National Assembly;
- Interparliamentary organizations in the world: objectives, functions and areas of interest;
- Tasks and Objectives of Establishing the Electronic Parliament in the Ukraine;
- Methods for preparing a session of Parliament in Côte d'Ivoire;
- The strategic Framework for the Capacity Building of the Cambodian Parliament; and
- Issues concerning States/Provinces which can be taken up in Central Legislatures (Parliaments).

Administrative matters

New members

A number of new members were admitted to the ASGP. Most were replacing existing members who had retired or moved to other employment. The following new members were admitted because their forum or legislature was joining the ASGP for the first time:

- East African Legislative Assembly;
- National Assembly of South Africa;
- Parliament of Georgia; and
- South African Development Community Parliamentary Forum.

Executive Committee matters

Mr Anders Forsberg, ASGP President, reported to the meeting that there were no nominees for the vacancy on the Executive Committee, resulting from the resignation of Dr Yogendra Narain (India), and it was agreed that the vacancy be reconsidered at the next meetings in Cape Town.

World e-Parliament Conference—11 October 2007

The IPU, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the ASGP, together with the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, organised a conference, to follow the regular meetings in Geneva, at which the challenges and benefits of ICT in

parliamentary processes would be considered. The Global Centre for ICT in Parliament is an initiative of the UN DESA with the IPU and its work is guided by a board comprised of Speakers and Presidents of Parliaments, the President of the IPU and the Under-Secretary-General for DESA. Participants included parliamentarians, secretaries general and other parliamentary staff.

Ms Surtees attended this conference, and chaired one of the four sessions, session 3 on *Parliamentary information systems: partnering to build high quality and sustainable information services*.

2. Cape Town—14 to 18 April 2008

Relations between the ASGP and the IPU

Mr Martin Chungong again attended a meeting and led debate on recent IPU activities to promote democracy by strengthening parliaments. He also foreshadowed a one day conference scheduled to follow the meetings in Geneva, during October 2008, on library research services for parliaments.

Consideration of parliamentary matters

The general meetings of the ASGP continued the format of selected general thematic debates. The chosen subjects were:

- The work of parliamentary committees; and
- Parliaments as peacebuilders in conflict-affected countries (a topic suggested by Australia).

Each subject was open to discussion and each was fully debated at the meeting. In addition, there were two presentations of responses to questionnaires, one on the autonomy of parliaments and the other on parliamentary relations with the media. There was also a presentation on the report from the World e-Parliament Conference held in October 2007 following the meetings in Geneva.

There were also presentations and discussions on specific parliamentary topics:

- Mr Zingile A. Dingani, Secretary General of the South African Parliament, made the first presentation, on the parliamentary system of the Republic of South Africa;
- The role of the back bench Member of the UK House of Commons;
- The reform of the Portuguese Parliament—problems and progress;
- Parliaments and privacy legislation;
- An example of well developed parliamentary minority rights: the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag;
- Increasing exchanges between parliamentary secretariats in a globalised world;

- The challenges of parliamentary administration in African countries: the case of Algeria;
- The African Network of Parliamentary Staff;
- Impeachment: still a relevant institution? Recent changes in Norway;
- Participation in the legislative process of the NGOs in Turkey; and
- The revision of the institutions of the Fifth Republic.

Administrative matters

New members

A number of new members were admitted to the ASGP. Most were replacing existing members who had retired or moved to other employment. New members were admitted from:

- House of Representatives of Afghanistan, House of Representatives of Grenada, National Assembly of the Republic of the Seychelles and National Parliament of Timor Leste, because these countries were joining the ASGP for the first time;
- Senate of Senegal and National Council of Provinces of South Africa, because these chambers were joining the ASGP for the first time; and
- Inter-parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), because this union was joining the ASGP for the first time.

Executive Committee matters

Mr Anders Forsberg reported that three of the four vacancies on the Executive Committee would be filled this session; the four vacancies having arisen from the carry over vacancy from the last session in Geneva, the resignations of Mrs Georgeta Ionescu (Romania) and Mr Abdeljalil Zerhouni (Morocco), and sadly, the death of Mr Samuel Ndindiri (Kenya) just prior to the current session. At the time appointed for close of nominations there were only three nominees and there was no need for a formal vote of the members. Mrs Jacqueline Biesheuvel-Vermeijden (Netherlands), Mrs Doris Mwinga (Zambia) and Mrs Martine Masika Katsuva (Congo, Democratic Republic) were declared elected to the Executive Committee. It was agreed that the remaining vacancy be reconsidered at the next meetings in Geneva.

Next meeting

A draft agenda for the next session, in the northern hemisphere Autumn 2008 in Geneva, was circulated. When further developed it will be placed on the ASGP website.

Part Two

Bilateral visit to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



Chapter 8

Bilateral visit to Jordan

Aims and Objectives

8.1 The aims and objectives of the delegation's visit were as follows:

- Renew and strengthen relations with the bicameral National Assembly;
- Gain an appreciation of the dynamics of key domestic social, economic and political issues;
- Obtain the views of parliamentary and other leaders on regional issues, specifically the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Syria;
- Examine opportunities for expanding trade and commercial relations, investments as well as in education and tourism ; and
- Discuss ways and means to enhance understanding between Australia and the Jordan through cultural and other exchange and people-to-people programs.

Overview

8.2 The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan occupies a central location in the Middle East region, being bounded by Syria in the north, Iraq in the east, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf of Aqaba in the east and south, and Israel and the Occupied West Bank in the west.

8.3 Jordan has an area of 89 544 square kilometres. Its topography ranges from the Jordan Valley, an extension of the Great African Rift, running north-south, flanked by a range of mountains, to an extensive desert plateau in the eastern two thirds of the country. From a maximum elevation of 1 500 metres above sea level, the Jordan River flows to the Dead Sea, which at 400 metres below sea level is the lowest spot on earth.

8.4 The capital Amman, Rabath Amman of the Bible and known to Egypt and Rome in biblical times as Philadelphia, has developed over several steep hills (jabal) and valleys (wadi). The old commercial area ("downtown" East Amman) is located at the foot of these hills, in a wadi in which the remains of a Roman amphitheatre have been preserved.

8.5 The Yarmouk River in the north and the Jordan River, which forms much of the eastern border, are the only significant rivers. Jordan's port of Aqaba, at the head of the Aqaba Gulf, lies on a 36 kilometre strip of coast and is Jordan's only access to the sea.

8.6 There is an extensive network of good quality roads connecting Jordan with Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Border crossings with Israel have been developed since the 26 October 1994 signing of a peace treaty between the two countries.

History

8.7 Jordan's modern history begins with the fall from power of the Ottoman Turks who had dominated the region from the 16th to the early 20th century. Their rule broke down during the First World War when Allied troops, commanded by General Allenby and supported by Arab guerrillas, drove the Turkish troops northward out of Palestine and what is now Jordan. T. E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, played a role in support of the pro-Hashemite Arab forces flanking the main British force. In 1918 Australian troops were in the forefront of fighting in parts of what is now Jordan, particularly around the city of Salt and in Amman itself.

8.8 In 1921, the independent Emirate of Transjordan was established under British aegis, with Emir Abdullah, son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca and King of the Hijaz, as its leader. On 25 May 1946, when Jordan achieved full independence as a sovereign state, Emir Abdullah became King. In 1948, with the ending of the British Mandate over Palestine and the creation of the State of Israel, the Kingdom of Jordan was extended to the West Bank of the Jordan River, including the Old City of Jerusalem. After King Abdullah's assassination in 1951, his elder son Prince Talal assumed the throne, but relinquished it a year later due to ill-health. In 1952, Prince Hussein was proclaimed King and the following year, at the age of eighteen he made his formal ascension to the throne. In 1965, King Hussein appointed his younger brother, Prince Hassan, as heir to the throne, following a change to the constitution to enable this. Then, in January 1999, while terminally ill, King Hussein appointed his eldest son, Abdullah, as Crown Prince. Abdullah became King on Hussein's death on 7 February 1999.

8.9 Jordan was economically and politically unstable during the early years of Hussein's rule. Under criticism from Arab nationalists for his close links with Britain, Hussein, noted for his moderate, pro-western approach, dismissed his British advisers in 1956. The government gradually grew stronger and there was general political stability in the 1960s until war broke out between Israel and the Arab states on 5 June 1967. By the end of that war, known as the Six Day War, Israel occupied the whole of Jordan west of the Jordan River, including Jerusalem.

8.10 Following the Six-Day War, Jordan became home to a large Palestinian refugee population. Hussein's attempts to reach understanding with Israel to avoid confrontation alienated the Palestinians. During 1970 the increasing power of the PLO in Jordan, stemming from the large Palestinian population, challenged Hussein's authority. Hussein ordered the regular Jordanian Army to attack Palestinian guerrilla bases in Jordan and, as a result of bloody clashes, amounting to a civil war, the Palestinians were checked. Good relations between Jordan and the PLO have long since been restored. The Government recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and in July 1988 King Hussein formally relinquished responsibility for the West Bank in favour of the PLO.

8.11 Jordan has maintained a close relationship with Iraq despite the deposing and assassination of the Iraqi Hashemite royal family in 1958. There have been substantial economic and trade ties between the two states. Following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces on 2 August 1990, Jordan declined to be a part of the Coalition forces that later forcibly ejected Iraq from Kuwaiti territory. In the short term Jordan suffered negative political and economic consequences as a result.

8.12 Another consequence for Jordan of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was the return of approximately 333,000 Jordanians and Palestinians formerly employed in Kuwait and other Gulf States.

8.13 Jordan steadily distanced itself from the regime of Saddam Hussein, while maintaining a sympathetic approach to the humanitarian suffering of the Iraqi people. This approach was continued by King Abdullah II who welcomed the removal of the regime in 2003 and has urged the earliest restoration of order, normalisation of the economy and return to Iraqi rule.

Government and Politics

8.14 Jordan is a constitutional monarchy, consisting of a bicameral parliament with a Lower House of Representatives and a Senate. The 110 members of the House are elected by universal adult franchise, with a number of seats being reserved for women and for various religions and ethnicities. The Senate's 55 members are appointed by the King. Though MPs can serve in the government, it is in reality a separate institution, with the Prime Minister appointed by the King and the Cabinet approved by the King on the Prime Minister's recommendation.

8.15 The elections of November 2007, assessed by observers as being essentially free and fair, maintained tribal and family affiliation as the dominant force in Jordanian politics. The Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, gained seven seats and lost 10 seats. Analysts credit this to the continuing power of the tribal vote, internal IAF divisions, and perceptions of the IAF's inability to assist constituents' concerns about rising fuel and food prices and inflation. In the cities, a high proportion of candidates were from the business sector, reinforcing perceptions of a growing culture of money politics. Six women were again elected under the quota system, with a seventh elected outright. Seven women were appointed to the Senate by the King.

8.16 The country has made progress in democratisation, with political parties being legalised in 1992, and political reform has been a priority of the government in the last few years.

8.17 Despite the King's encouragement of the formation of political parties at the last two elections, the political environment remains largely unchanged, with candidates reluctant to form party groups or show much interest in the concept of detailed party platforms.

8.18 Parliamentary representation proportionally favours the less populous voting regions of the 'East Bank' Transjordanians loyal to the Hashemites, who register for voting in their traditional family regions, over Palestinian Jordanians who have largely settled in urban areas where the ratio of elected member to voting population is much less favourable. It seems that for the foreseeable future Transjordanians will continue to be over-represented in political institutions, the public service, the armed forces and the police and at public universities, with little presence in commercial and professional activities, where Palestinian Jordanians dominate.

8.19 Security and domestic stability remain high priorities for the Jordanian Government. Unlike his father, King Hussein, King Abdullah has not yet faced any direct challenges to his rule. The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, has, however, been increasingly critical of the government over Jordan's alliance with the United States and relationship with Israel. Jordan has resolutely and effectively dealt with the threat posed by Islamist terrorists linked to Al Qaida, and is active in contesting the extremist ideology of such groups.

8.20 The King in particular has been actively seeking to reclaim Islam from extremism, heralded by the Amman Message of November 2004 and followed by a major regional Islamic Conference in Amman in 2005 that condemned terrorism and fundamentalism in the name of Islam.

8.21 The Amman Message process is ongoing, having broadened to include the promotion of interfaith dialogue, and remains a key theme of the King's speeches to domestic and regional audiences and the international community.

8.22 There have been a number of serious terrorist plots in 2002-2005, including the assassination of a US diplomat outside his home in Amman, a foiled chemical attack against key targets in Amman, a rocket attack against a US warship at Aqaba, the bombing of three Amman hotels in which 60 people were killed,.

8.23 Mr Nader Dahabi was appointed Prime Minister in November 2007, the King mandating him to progress social and economic reforms, particularly energy security through alternative and renewable resources including nuclear energy. Economic growth and enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy were identified as prerequisites for security and social stability. Prime Minister Dahabi's cabinet is dominated by technocrats, including senior civil servants and academics. In recent years, governments have changed or been reshuffled every 18 months to two years.

Economy

8.24 King Abdullah has maintained the general economic orientation established by his father but also brought into the governmental arena a new generation of technocrats, including high profile Palestinian Jordanians, committed to economic liberalisation to bring Jordan into the global economy, through membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2000 and conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States in 2002.

8.25 Jordan received a glowing report card when it graduated from the International Monetary Fund's 15-year economic adjustment and stabilisation program in 2004, which had resulted from a debt crisis in 1988-89. However the anticipated benefits of Jordan's efforts have not been fully realised and there is a widespread perception that macroeconomic successes have not filtered down to benefit the living standards of ordinary Jordanians.

8.26 The disturbances in the Palestinian Territories and in Israel after September 2000, the second Intifada, aggravated domestic tensions, discouraged investment and cut tourism for some years. Although in some respects the Iraq situation has created further regional uncertainties that impact on Jordan, particularly regarding security, Jordan's economy is benefiting from the country's role as a regional hub for international organisations and commercial trade in the rebuilding of Iraq, and Iraq is now among the top foreign investors in Jordan.

8.27 Nevertheless the Jordanian economy is fragile and narrowly based, and regional unrest quickly impacts on the economy, particularly Jordan's crucial tourism sector.

8.28 Jordan's main exports include clothing, pharmaceutical products, phosphate, potash and fertilisers.

8.29 Historically, Jordan has depended on foreign loans, aid and remittances from workers overseas. It aspires to become a regional centre of excellence in education, IT and health services. These are certainly areas where there is scope for collaboration with Australia.

8.30 Jordan continues to pursue bilateral FTA's and to make efforts to meet WTO targets. It has agreements with the Arab region and the EU, FTAs with the US and Singapore, and is negotiating one with Pakistan.

8.31 Current economic policy is focused on efforts to encourage foreign investment and on an ongoing privatisation program, particularly of the energy sector. The national airline, Royal Jordanian, has prospered following privatisation, and longer term policy may focus on the financial sector, including the Amman Stock Exchange. Strong inflows of foreign investment, particularly from the Gulf and Iraq, are likely to continue as major infrastructure projects are opened to the private sector. Revised investment and tax laws, attractive to the corporate sector, have also been forecast.

8.32 Fuel subsidies were a significant contributor to the budget deficit. Lowered in stages since 2002, they were finally abolished in February 2008, despite the widespread unpopularity of the government's policy and the genuine hardship for lower income earners.

8.33 A US\$ 7.3 billion budget for 2008 was approved by parliament in February 2008, after the government agreed to increase low-income government salaries and pensions, to tax-exempt a range of basic commodities, and to divert budget funding to the Social Safety Net to help offset the increased cost of living from the scheduled

abolition of fuel subsidies. The budget deficit has been forecast at US\$ 1 billion, almost double that of 2007, and comes on the back of continued reliance on foreign grants amounting to US\$ 680 million in 2007.

8.34 The Economist Intelligence Unit has forecast real GDP growth at 4.8 percent for 2008, down from an estimated 5.7 percent for 2007. Inflation has already doubled in 2008 from 5.4 per cent in 2007 and may go higher before the end of the calendar year due to the abolition of fuel subsidies and strong global food prices. The current account should remain heavily in deficit, owing to solid import growth from a high base and strong international oil prices. Jordanian official figures show unemployment at around 14 percent, though the real figure is widely estimated to be more like 25 per cent.

Foreign Policy

Middle East Peace Process

8.35 With a significant ethnic Palestinian population, comprising more than 60 per cent of the total population, in addition to 1.7 million refugees, Jordan has a key interest in the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It continues to believe that the Palestinian issue is the one that fuels all other conflicts in the region.

8.36 Jordan concluded a peace agreement with Israel in 1994, following the signing of the Oslo Accords. King Abdullah has long supported a negotiated settlement to the conflict. He maintains a regular dialogue on this with the Israeli, Palestinian and US leadership. He is a strong supporter of the work of the Middle East Quartet and has been an active proponent of the Arab Peace Initiative, which proposes essentially a land-for-peace deal and normalisation of relations with Israel, since its original formulation in 2004.

Iraq

8.37 Jordan has played a key role in supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Iraq. It has longstanding commercial and economic links with Iraq and, due to the security situation there, promotes itself as a gateway for other countries looking to enter the Iraqi market. The Iraq programs of international organisations to which Australia contributes funding, including the UN, World Bank and International Organisation for Migration, will remain based in Jordan for the foreseeable future. Jordan also provided facilities and other support for the training of Iraqi police through the Jordan International Police Training Centre (JIPTC) outside Amman, to which Australia contributed a rotating deployment of two Australian Federal Police trainers from June 2004 to April 2007.

8.38 Jordan is nevertheless bearing the social consequences of the 'temporary' presence of around half a million Iraqis, a number identified in mid-2007 by Fafu, a Norwegian non-government organisation. This involves the provision of services for refugees and managing popular perceptions that other affluent Iraqis are pushing up property prices and targeting high-end goods and services.

8.39 Jordan remains concerned about the security of its border with Iraq and periodically tightens regulations to stem the flow of refugees. It continues to resist calls from the UNHCR and others to define the Iraqi population in Jordan as refugees, as to do so would result in Jordan being considered a first country of asylum, despite the fact that doing so would provide access to international donor assistance for the Iraqi population.

8.40 Despite Jordan's firm support for Iraq's democratisation, it continues to fear the break-up of Iraq as the worst possible outcome, convinced that it would fan rather than contain sectarian tension. King Abdullah has been publicly critical for a number of years of the possible impact of a Shia-dominated Iraq for the region, particularly its links with Iran, which is seen as emboldening Hizballah in Lebanon and also Hamas in the Palestinian Territories.

Lebanon

8.41 Jordan has signalled to both the government and Lebanese parliament that dialogue between all parties is necessary to resolve the current political impasse.

Bilateral Relations

8.42 Australia and Jordan enjoy a warm and increasingly diverse relationship developed through regular high-level contact in recent years, including three visits by former Foreign Minister Downer and visits by other former Ministers.

8.43 Australia's political and security interests in Jordan are sustained by its role as an engaged player with moderate positions on developments in the region. The Jordanian Government is supportive of coalition engagement in Iraq and is wary of the involvement of Hamas in Palestinian politics.

8.44 Like Australia, Jordan in recent years has been victim of terrorism and is a strong opponent of it. Australian cooperation on security issues with Jordan is a particular factor of the relationship.

8.45 In May 1999 the then Governor-General issued an invitation to King Abdullah to make an official visit to Australia. The invitation was renewed in December 2001. King Abdullah made a private visit to Darwin in June 2001 en route to visiting the Jordanian military contingent in East Timor.

Trade and Investment

8.46 Australia's commercial relations with Jordan, while modest, are strongly in its favour. Principal exports to Jordan are live sheep, dairy and meat products. Two-way trade amounted to \$A 76 million in 2007. Imports from Jordan, mainly fertilisers, amounted to \$A 3.5 million.

8.47 The volume of Australian chilled and frozen meat in the Jordanian market is increasing. In May 2005, Australia concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with Jordan on the live animal trade in order to better underpin the trade. Jordan has committed to acquiring facilities for use if required to hold animals on land in the event that quarantine health issues were to arise in relation to a consignment of live animals exported from Australia.

8.48 Trade in education services is increasing. The Australian Embassy in Jordan has strong relations with the Education Ministry and Jordanian universities. Australian education consultants are engaged on two separate projects on quality assurance and examination standards with the Jordanian government. Australian universities exhibitions are held annually in Amman. There was a 33 percent increase in students to Australia in 2007. The majority of enrolments are in the higher education sector, especially Masters coursework and English-language courses. Vocational education and training (VET) is the popular third sector. Jordan is one of only three Middle East countries to have been successful in winning some of the Australian Government's Endeavour scholarships, three in each of the last two years.

8.49 Australian and Jordanian aviation authorities have made revisions to existing air services arrangements to permit Qantas and Royal Jordanian Airlines to code-share on services to and from Jordan. While code-sharing has not yet eventuated, Royal Jordanian has joined the One World Alliance, and operates a direct service to Bangkok.

Defence Cooperation

8.50 Australia has a modest program of bilateral defence cooperation focused on visits and training, including placements at Australian staff colleges. Australia's involvement in Iraq has increased the interaction between the ADF and its Jordanian counterparts.

Bilateral Aid

8.51 Australia does not have a bilateral aid program with Jordan. AusAID provided \$A 4.2 million to United Nations Relief and Works Agency's core budget in 2006-07, which supports humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian Territories and refugees in Jordan, where 1.7 million are registered with UNRWA, Lebanon and Syria.

8.52 Since 2003, AusAID funding has also been provided intermittently through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Jordan for Iraqi refugees amounting to \$A 3million in 2006-07 for Jordan and Syria).

8.53 Officers of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) at the Australian Embassy in Amman deliver a substantial program of humanitarian resettlement from the region, particularly from the Iraqi caseload. DIAC also funds a number of humanitarian resettlement projects delivered by the International Organisation for Migration.

8.54 Jordan has ratified the major international human rights conventions, but also acknowledges that continuing efforts are needed at the societal level, particularly on gender and equity issues. A number of ‘honour killings’ occur each year, and are a sensitive topic for many Jordanians. Although the monarchy and government condemn the practice, successive parliaments have declined to overturn legislation that allows judicial leniency for perpetrators.

8.55 Funding has been provided to Jordan for three projects under AusAID’s Human Rights Small Grants Scheme. In 2005-06, the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) received a grant of \$A 42 000 for capacity building for human rights NGOs in international human rights standards. In 2006-07, the NCHR again received a grant of \$A 69 900, for capacity and awareness building for labour inspectors in international labour standards and violations, particularly among foreign workers in factories in Jordan’s qualified industrial zones. A third round of funding of \$A79 500 was recently approved for the NCHR, for capacity building for officials and NGOs on environmental issues.

8.56 Jordan succeeded Australia as the President of the Mine Ban Convention in November 2007. Under a strategic national plan, it is close to meeting its mine clearance deadline of 2009. It has strongly promoted universalisation of the Convention in the region. Australia provided \$A 30 000 to support Jordan in its Convention Presidency, and a further \$A 1 million for landmine clearance along Jordan’s northern border with Syria.

Cultural Relations, and the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR)

8.57 The Australian Embassy in Jordan has a modest public diplomacy budget that funds a small number of cultural events each year. Australian embassies in the region work with DFAT’s Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) to augment their cultural exchange and public diplomacy objectives. The Chairman of CAAR visited Jordan in June 2004 and the Council is looking to visit again in 2008-09. Two Jordanians participated in CAAR’s four-week Young Professionals Exchange Program in Australia in February-March 2008, and Jordanians are eligible to apply for CAAR’s new postgraduate Scholarships Program. The Council also funds projects of wider benefit to regional posts, such as the recent subtitling into Arabic of five popular Australian films, for use by our Embassies at regional film festivals or as part of DFAT’s ‘Embassy Roadshow’ festival program. The Embassy in Amman has held three very successful Australian film festivals in recent years, and held another film festival in May 2008.

Delegation’s Visit

8.58 In the following section of the report, the Delegation provides detailed information on its appointments and other activities in Jordan.

Meeting with the Minister for Social Development, HE Ms Hala Lattouf

8.59 The ministry is one of the oldest portfolios in the Jordan. The ministry's goals includes the development of local communities, organising voluntary social work and activating the community, preserving family coherence, providing the necessary services for needy citizens in order to integrate them into society, limiting delinquency and crime, and providing rehabilitation programs for the disabled.

8.60 Specifically, the ministry identifies areas of poverty and suggests programs and work strategies to tackle poverty and follow up the implementation of these programs in coordination with relevant bodies. It also provides educational, vocational, and other services for disabled persons, including a disabled employment program. The ministry provides counselling, social care and rehabilitation services for young people. It also provides care for the elderly and monitors aged care centres administered by charitable societies. Finally, the ministry emphasises the unity and coherence of the family and provides services for orphans and broken families, in addition to supervising private and charitable societies.

8.61 Minister Lattouf briefed the delegation on various aspects of the work of her portfolio, indicating that there were about 1 000 non-government organisations (NGOs) registered with the department and over 3 000 across all portfolios. Many of the services of the department are provided through NGOs and there are auditing and reporting procedures in place to ensure accountability. The Minister identified a number of challenges facing Jordan, especially poverty and unemployment.

8.62 The Minister told the delegation that programs for young people are particularly important as approximately 70 per cent of the population is under the age of 30.

8.63 The Minister also provided information on other matters including juvenile justice, apprenticeships, women shelters and programs to address poverty. She advised that the average wage was approximately 110 Jordanian Dollars (JDs) a month (approximately \$A 162) and the unemployment rate is 30 per cent. The government provides social security payments of 180 JD per month (approximately \$A 265).

8.64 The Minister commended the strong relations between Australia and Jordan and the high level of cooperation that exists in many fields.

Meeting with the Minister for Environment, HE Mr Khalid Irani and the Commissioner General for the National Centre for Human Rights, HE Mr Shaher Bak

8.65 Born in 1964, Mr Irani received a Bachelor of Science in Soils from the University of Jordan in 1986 and his Master of Science in Arid Land Use from the University of Jordan in 1989. Since 1996, he has served as Director General at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and project coordinator for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project at Dana. His previous positions included manager of protected areas department at the RSCN (1989-1996), research assistant at the University of Jordan (1986-1989), and land-use planner at the Ministry of

Agriculture in 1986. He was a member of the board of trustees of King Hussein Foundation, the National Committee of Small GEF grant projects, the World protected areas' commission for the Middle East, Friends of the Earth Middle East and a member of the Birdlife Global Council Board of Directors. Mr Irani also served as environment minister in the previous government.

8.66 The Minister identified two main environmental challenges for Jordan. The first is lack of water and the Minister advised that Jordan is the 4th worst water resourced country in the world. The accepted "poverty line" for access to water is 1 000 cubic metres per person annually but in Jordan is figure is 150 cubic metres. Accordingly, Jordan is introducing more organic, higher value crops. Certain areas have exhausted water resources and water degradation is based on a lack of quantity not quality of water.

8.67 The Minister also pointed out that work is being done on the technical, economic and social feasibility, as well as environmental implications, of pumping water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea in the Jordan Valley. This is because water levels in the Dead Sea are dropping about one metre each year.

8.68 The second challenge is energy as 96 per cent of Jordan's energy is accessed externally The Minister advised that although oil shale presents some future prospects for energy use, Jordan has no significant oil deposits and therefore it imports most of its oil.

8.69 Although Jordan is not a significant contributor to climate change, Mr Irani said that it will be significantly affected by resulting water shortages. The Minister added that her department is working cooperatively with other portfolios to reduce emissions in heavy industries such as cement.

8.70 The Minister also drew the attention of the delegation to the work of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature. The delegation noted that the society aims to conserve the biodiversity of Jordan and integrate its conservation programs with socio-economic development, while promoting wider public support and action for the protection of the natural environment within Jordan and neighbouring countries.

8.71 The society was established in 1966 under the patronage of the late King Hussein, and given the responsibility by the Government of protecting Jordan's natural heritage. It is an independent non-profit non-government organisation. Interestingly, it is one of the few voluntary organizations in the Middle East to be granted this kind of public service mandate.

8.72 Its work includes establishing and managing protected areas to safeguard Jordan's natural environment and biodiversity; conducting captive breeding programs to save endangered species from extinction; undertaking research to provide a scientific base to aid conservation efforts and ensuring the socio-economic development of rural communities by creating job opportunities through eco-tourism, craft production, and other nature-based businesses.

8.73 During the meeting, the Australian Ambassador announced funding of 50835 JDs (\$A 79 500) under the AusAID Human Rights Small Grants Scheme for a project of the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR). The chair of the NCHR, Mr Shaher Bak, gave the delegation a briefing on the project. This project aims at raising awareness of international standards and national legislation that guarantees the right to a healthy environment. The NCHR will work closely with the Ministry of Environment to building the capacity of the Ministry's environmental inspectors and environment police to monitor and report violations of the right to a healthy environment.

8.74 This is the third time the NCHR has received funding from Australia. In recent years, funding has been provided for a project to support the institutional capacities of Jordanian NGOs active in the field of human rights, and to support labour rights.

Meeting with the Speaker of the House of Representatives, HE Abdul Hadi Al-Majali

8.75 The delegation was pleased to meet with the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Abdul Hadi Al-Majali.

8.76 Speaker Majali has a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Baghdad University and attended the Royal College for Defence Studies in the United Kingdom. He has been Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Jordan's Armed Forces, Ambassador to the United States and Minister for Public Works and Housing. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1993 and has been appointed Speaker of the House on six occasions.

8.77 The House of Representatives is directly elected by universal adult suffrage. Members have 4 year terms, unless the King dissolves the House earlier. There are 110 seats in the House with 6 seats reserved for women, 9 for Christians and 3 for Circassians. The Parliament has the right to approve, reject or amend legislation proposed by the Cabinet but has limited capacity to initiate legislation and it cannot enact laws without the assent of the Senate.

8.78 Most of the members are not affiliated to a party. This is a result of the clan history of the country and the ban on political parties from 1957 to 1992. In 1992, a new Political Parties Law was passed which allowed multi-party representation. However, the single-member-district system introduced in 1993 favours tribal and family ties over political and ideological affiliations. The current House of Representatives consists of a majority of independent and tribal representatives.

8.79 The voting age is 18 and there are 44 districts or constituencies with a varying number of seats in each district. Electors vote for one candidate in their district and the seats are awarded to the highest-polling individual candidates. This system is known as the "single non-transferable vote system" and is considered by some commentators to be disadvantageous to the development of political parties. This is because it results in votes being cast for individual candidates or those who represent specific groups in

a district and not those from a specific political party. In constituencies where tribal culture is strong, electors tend to vote for those candidates connected to their tribe or family.

8.80 The Speaker stressed that the Palestinian issue is a “corner stone” issue for Jordan, pointing out that Jordan has been significantly affected for some time by the large number of Palestinian refugees who have come to Jordan. This has in turn has put considerable strain on the economy and a high foreign debt

8.81 He indicated that Jordan supports peace that will result from Israel’s withdraw from occupied land and the establishment of a Palestinian state that will live in peace with the state of Israel. Mr Jenkins advised the Speaker that Australia is committed to a two-state solution, based on the legitimate aspirations of Palestinian people for a state of their own and on Israel's right to live in peace with secure borders. Australia welcomed continuing negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and urges both parties to continue to focus on the shred objective of a final peace treaty by the end of 2008.

8.82 The Speaker also advised that an estimated 500 000 Iraqis have sought refuge in Jordan and that this has put considerable pressure on the economy, infrastructure , schooling, health care, affordable housing and rising costs of goods and services. The Speaker emphasised that Iraqis were guests of the country and every effort was being made to provide services, including schooling and health services.

8.83 Mr Jenkins told the Speaker that since 2001 more than 11 000 Iraqis have been resettled in Australia under an offshore Humanitarian Program. Also, since 2003, Australia has provided \$A 75 million for humanitarian assistance to Iraq and over the next three years will provide an additional humanitarian and reconstruction package of \$A 165 million.

8.84 The delegation also discussed the Australian government’s decision to stand for election to the United Nations Security Council in 2012. The delegation emphasised that Australia, as a creative middle power, is committed to addressing serious global challenges such as climate change, the prevention of conflict and terrorism.

Meeting with the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, HE Mr Nader Dahabi

8.85 . After the parliamentary elections in November 2007, King Abdullah II dissolved the cabinet and, on 25 November 2007, a new cabinet was sworn in. Mr Nader Dahabi was appointed as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. The delegation was honoured to meet with Prime Minister Dahabi.

8.86 Mr Dahabi graduated from Al Hussein College in Amman in 1964 and joined the Royal Jordanian Air Force as a cadet. Mr Dahabi holds masters degrees in aeronautical engineering from Cranfield Institute of Technology in Britain and public administration from Auburn University in the United States. From 1994 to 2001 he headed the Royal Jordanian Airlines and since 2004, he was a chief commissioner of

the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority. He also served as Transport Minister in between 2000 and 2003.

8.87 The delegation welcomed the opportunity to discuss a range of matter including the Middle East situation, progressing the peace process and relations between Jordan and Australia.

8.88 The Prime Minister indicated that Jordan under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II supported international efforts to establish an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian soil with Jerusalem as its capital, within the framework of the peace process and the two-state solution. He said that the momentum of the peace process arising from the Annapolis meeting needed to be maintained. He emphasised that arriving at a just solution to the Palestinian issue will contribute to solving other issues and conflicts in the region. He urged the international community, including Australia, to support the Palestinian National Authority in its efforts to establish the Palestinian state and build its institutions.

8.89 The Prime Minister and the delegation also discussed the situation in Lebanon. Mr Dahabi said that Jordan fully respected the sovereignty of Lebanon and rejected all foreign interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. Lebanon needed to reach consensus on the presidential election within the constitution.

8.90 The Prime Minister also addressed the issue of Iraq, indicating that Jordan supported a united, sovereign and stable Iraq. It also supported national reconciliation in Iraq and rejected all forms of sectarianism, violence and terrorism.

8.91 The delegation also discussed the Australian government's decision to stand for election to the United Nations Security Council in 2012 and that this decision reflected Australia's increased engagement with the UN. Australia is determined to make its contribution to the future development of a robust rules-based order that enhances the security and economic well-being of all. Australia is committed to addressing the serious global challenges and as a member of the Security Council can play a critical role in addressing these challenges.

Meeting with the Minister of Interior, HE Mr Eid Al Fayez

8.92 Minister Fayez obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Political Science from Beirut Arab University in 1970. He was appointed Director General of the Jordanian-Iraqi Transport Company in 1983, Director General of the Ports Corporation in 1986 and Secretary General of the Ministry of Youth in 1990. He assumed the post of an adviser at the Royal Court in 1993. Mr Fayez, who was Minister of Labour in 1999, also served as Minister of Youth and State.

8.93 The Minister briefed the delegation on the work of the Ministry and in particular the issue of Iraqi refugees in Jordan. He advised that refugees came to Jordan in 1948 (establishment of Israel), 1967 (Six day war), 1990 (Kuwait) and now following the invasion of Iraq. It is estimated that there are over 500 000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan.

8.94 The Minister told the delegation that the King has insisted that Iraqis should be treated as guests and not as refugees and accept them until they can safely return to Iraq.

8.95 Although Jordan is a small country with limited resources, the Minister said that a variety of services were being provided to the Iraqis, including health and schooling. However, this situation had put considerable strain on the Jordanian economy. Although refugees from Iraq were going to Syria, Qatar, Dubai and Egypt, most came to Jordan.

Meeting with the President of the Senate, HE Mr Zaid Al-Rifai

8.96 The delegation was honoured to meet with the President of the Senate HE Zaid Rifai. Mr Rifai is one of Jordan's most respected and experienced politicians. He is a graduate of Harvard University and served as Prime Minister of Jordan from 1973 to 1976 and again from 1985 to 1989, playing a key role in Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. President Rifai has served in the Senate for over 20 years and has been its presiding officer for several terms. He has also represented Jordan as an ambassador to Egypt, Lebanon, the United Kingdom and the United Nations.

8.97 The delegation noted that the Senate has 55 members who are appointed by the King from designated categories of public figures and long-serving politicians. The required age for membership is 40 years. The Senate is a respected institution and was described to the delegation as the "house of the wise". Senators have a for a four-year term, the last appointments being made in November 2007.

8.98 At the beginning of the meeting, Mr Jenkins observed that when his father was Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives he visited Jordan in 1985 and met Mr Rifai, who was then Prime Minister of Jordan. Twenty-three years later he was honoured to do the same.

8.99 The President raised a number of issues with the delegation including :

- The critical need for peace solution in the Middle East;
- The role of the United States in the region and its impact on US domestic policy
- The situation in Gaza and Lebanon
- Possible nuclear escalation
- The role of Iran in the region

8.100 On the domestic front, he reiterated that refugees put an enormous strain on Jordanian resources but nevertheless they are welcome and provided with resources and services. He also raised the challenges arising from Jordan's lack of Energy resources.

Visit to Baqaa Palestinian Refugee Camp

8.101 Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programs for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, most recently extending it until 30 June 2011.

8.102 Since its establishment, the Agency has fed, housed and clothed tens of thousands of fleeing refugees and at the same time educated and given health care to hundreds of thousands of young refugees. In fact, UNRWA has contributed to the welfare and human development of four generations of Palestine refugees. Originally envisaged as a temporary organisation, the Agency has gradually adjusted its programs to meet the changing needs of the refugees. Today, UNRWA is the main provider of basic services including, education, health, relief and social services, to over 4.5 million registered Palestine refugees in the Middle East.

8.103 In Jordan, UNRWA provides a variety of services to approximately 330 000 registered Palestinian refugees in 10 camps, including Baqaa camp.

8.104 Baqaa camp was one of six emergency camps set up in 1968 to accommodate Palestine refugees and displaced persons who left the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Since that time tents and prefabricated huts have been replaced by concrete buildings and houses. The camp, which is the largest in Jordan, is situated about 20 km north of Amman. There are 90 953 registered refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) runs 16 schools for 15 659 enrolled pupils in 2006-07, with a teaching staff of 525. The schools run on a double shift basis in 8 school buildings. The Agency runs two clinics and one mother-and-child health care clinic staffed by 10 doctors, 3 dentists, and 59 nurses and assistants for about 1 300 patients daily.

8.105 Although a refugee camp the delegation was impressed with the resourcefulness of its inhabitants and the impressive facilities they have established.

8.106 It was particularly encouraging to visit one of the schools in the camp and see the bright cheerful faces of the students as they went about their lessons. Their warm and enthusiastic welcome was particularly heartfelt.

Meeting with the Minister for Political Development and Minister of State for Legal Affairs, HE Kamal Nasser

8.107 The Minister briefed the delegation on the work of the portfolio, advising that it promotes the concept of political development in which all society sectors participate, integrity, accountability and transparency; rule of law, justice and equality and the effective participation of the Jordanian women and realisation their capabilities in all aspects of life.

8.108 It achieves these ideals by:

- ensuring the principle of separation among the three constitutional authorities;
- enhancing values of loyalty and citizenship;
- maintaining political stability and national security;
- creating a vibrant political environment for a participative active civil society;
- adopting the principles of good governance, transparency and accountability;
- deepening the foundations of political upbringing and national and civic education; and
- proposing legislative amendments related to political development.

8.109 The Minister advised the delegation that his Ministry is committed to expanding the grass roots participation in civil society and building a culture of democracy. He added that Article 24 of the Constitution – *The Nation is the source of all powers* – is the source of all authority in Jordan.

8.110 The Minister emphasised the need to focus on women and young people their participation in local and national institutions. In this regard he drew attention to the fact that there were four Ministers in the government and that many women hold high office in the Jordan.

8.111 The Minister and the delegation discussed the role of political parties – and that, in contrast to Jordan, Australian political parties dominate the political scene.

Meeting with the Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, HE Ms Suhair Al-Ali

8.112 Minister Al-Ali served as general manager and country officer of Citigroup in Jordan from 1996 until her appointment in former Prime Minister Adnan Badran's government. Before that, she was general manager of the Saudi American Bank Representative Office in New York from 1993. Holder of a Masters Degree in Development Economics from Georgetown University, she began her career at Citibank as an executive trainee, undertaking several responsibilities before moving to New York in 1993. Ms Al-Ali serves as a board member and/or a trustee for several professional and business associations, universities and NGOs.

8.113 The delegation was pleased to meet with the Minister and receive a briefing on the work of the Ministry and in particular the strong emphasis that the King and the government are placing on social, political and economic reform. This emphasis is epitomised by the *We are all Jordan* commission.

8.114 The delegation was told that the Ministry has several priorities including increasing real GDP growth, reducing poverty and unemployment, increasing the national economy's competitiveness and enhancing the overall business and

investment climate and improving government services provided to the local community.

8.115 During the meeting, the Minister highlighted Jordan's efforts in accelerating political, social and economic national reform agenda underlining the importance of these reforms to Jordan. She also noted the recent adoption of several new laws including legislation on political parties, financial disclosure and the anti money laundering.

8.116 The Minister reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to proceed with the reform programs as articulated in the government's 3-year Executive Programme for the "Kuluna Al Urdun"/ National Agenda Initiative.

8.117 Ms Al-Ali discussed the various economic challenges and measures taken by Jordan to address such challenges. She also briefed the delegation on the Amman Message launched by His Majesty King Abdullah II and Jordan's position as a voice of moderation in the region.

Joint Meeting with the Chair and members of the Arab and International Affairs Committee and the Jordan-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Association

8.118 Legislative powers are shared by the King and Parliament, which is comprised of the 55 member of the Senate, and 110 members of the House of Representatives. While senators are appointed by the King, members of the lower house are directly elected by universal suffrage. Article 34 of the Constitution entitles the king to dissolve either house of Parliament or to discharge any of its members. The normal parliamentary term is four years.

8.119 The process of lawmaking centres on Parliament. Both houses of Parliament initiate debates and vote on legislation. Proposed laws are referred by the Prime Minister to the House, where members can accept, amend or reject them. Each proposal is referred to a special committee in the House for consideration. If the House accepts the proposed law, it refers it to the government to draft it in the form of a bill and submit it back to the House for approval. A bill approved by the House is then passed on by the House Speaker to the Senate for debate and a vote.

8.120 If approved, the bill is then submitted to the king, who can either grant consent by royal decree or return the bill unapproved with justification for his refusal. In this case, the bill is returned to the House, where the review and voting process is repeated. Should both houses, meeting jointly, pass the bill by a two-thirds majority, it becomes an Act of Parliament, constitutionally overriding the monarch's veto. Any bill rejected by the Senate is returned to the House of Deputies for amendment. Disagreement between the two houses is settled by a two-thirds majority vote in a joint session of Parliament. The Constitution also empowers both the Senate and the House of Deputies to submit legislation to the government in the form of a draft law.

8.121 The House also oversees the work of the Executive branch. It does this through questions to the Prime Minister and ministers, debates and proposals for action. Most

importantly, the House may pass a vote of no-confidence in the cabinet or ministers. This is based on a request for such a vote signed by at least ten members.

8.122 The House is also entitled to submit a vote of no-confidence in the government or a minister. If the House votes by an absolute majority to withhold confidence from the cabinet, then the cabinet must resign. The House can also withhold confidence from an individual minister, who must then resign.

8.123 Members are elected through general, secret, and direct elections. A member must have been a Jordanian citizen for at least ten years cannot have dual citizenship and must be over 30 years of age. The term of the House is four calendar years but the King may extend this term by Royal Decree for a period not less than one year, and not more than two years. At the beginning of each term, the House elects a Speaker and two deputies for one calendar year. At the beginning of each term the House also elects the members of the following 14 committees: Legal, Financial and Economic, Arab and International Affairs, Administration, Education, Culture, and Youth, National Guidance, Health and Environment, Agriculture and Water, Labor and Social Development, Energy and Mineral Resources, Public Services, Tourism, and Archaeology “Antiquities”, Public Freedoms and Citizens’ Rights, Palestine and Rural and Desert “Badia” Committee

8.124 During these very interesting discussions the delegation noted that in Jordan all proposed laws are referred to relevant committees for enquiry and report and that Ministers attend these meetings to explain the proposed law.

8.125 During the meeting Dr Hani was invited to give his framework for future bilateral relations between Australia and Jordan. He enumerated the following:

- Enhance and develop education scholarships , particularly in the fields of Medicine and Agriculture
- Promote Student exchange programs to foster social and cultural awareness
- Establish a Graduate/Alumni club
- Establish an International development fund to sponsor small grants
- Encourage Australian investment in Jordan as a conduit to Iraq
- Foster Australian Tourism to Jordan
- Establish sister City Relationships

8.126 The delegation commended these suggestions to the Australian Ambassador in Jordan and through this report to the Australian Foreign Minister

8.127 Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, HE Mr Salaheddin Al-Bashir. Dr. Bashir previously served as Minister of State for Government Performance in

2005, and Minister of Justice, Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs from 2003-2005 as well as Minister of Industry and Trade from 2001-2003.

8.128 He is the founder and former managing partner of the International Business Legal Associates, a licensed member of Jordan Bar Association since 1993 and was an Associate Professor of Law at the University of Jordan from 1996-1999. Dr. Bashir also served as member of the Economic Consultative Council, the National Agenda Steering Committee, the “Jordan First” National Commission, the Executive Committee of Kuluna Al-Urdun (We are all Jordan), board of directors of King Abdullah II Design and Development Bureau, Yale Law School Middle East Legal Studies Seminar Organising Committee and Jordan Career Education Foundation. He was awarded the Al Kawkab Medal of First Order and was named the World Economic Forum’s Young Global Leader.

8.129 Dr. Bashir is a graduate of McGill University, Canada, 1996 with a PhD in Law. He obtained an LL.M in Harvard Law School in the US in 1988 and LL.B. from Jordan University in 1987.

8.130 The discussions with the Minister covered many of the issues already canvassed with other Ministers, including the Prime Minister. However the delegation was reassured about the closeness of the relationship that exists between Australia and Jordan. In this vein, the delegation specifically took the opportunity to raise several issues from an Australian perspective including:

- Australia's commitment to a two-state solution in the Middle East based on the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a state of their own and on Israel's right to live in peace with secure borders;
- Australia's deep concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza as well as in Southern Israel;
- Australia's view that only a negotiated solution will provide a just and lasting peace.

8.131 The delegation also reiterated the various steps the Australian Government is taking to alleviate refugee and humanitarian problems in the area. Finally the delegation drew the Foreign Minister's attention to Australia's proposal to seek membership of the United Nations Security Council in 2012 and commended this candidature to Jordan.

Attendance at the opening of an exhibition of historical photographs from the Australian War Memorial collection

8.132 The delegation was delighted to attend the opening of an exhibition of 40 historical photographs from the Australian War Memorial collection. The exhibition titled “ANZACS and the Great Arab Revolt” shows ANZAC soldiers in and around Amman and Salt in 1918.

8.133 These fascinating photographs give a glimpse of what was then Transjordan during the Great Arab Revolt and also attest to the lengthy history of Australia's friendly relations with Jordan and the Jordanian people.

8.134 The captions of the photographs give an indication of their historical importance, for both Australia and Jordan:

Three Australian soldiers astride horses in the ruins of an ancient amphitheatre. [Now known as the Forum, Wasat al-Balad, Amman]

A view of Amman, showing the ANZAC receiving station and two tents in the foreground.

Members of the Australian Light Horse, exhausted after the first battle at Amman, returning from Es Salt.

Attendance at ANZAC Day Dawn Service

8.135 The delegation was honoured to attend an ANZAC Day Dawn Service commemorating the landing at Gallipoli, 93 years ago on 25 April 1915. The year 2008 also marks the ninetieth anniversary of military engagements of ANZAC troops in and around Amman in 1918.

8.136 The service was held in the grounds of the Amman Citadel, in the area of the Roman Temple, directly overlooking downtown Amman. This location is particularly appropriate as it was the site of military action between ANZAC forces and some 2 500 Turkish troops in September 1918 in what was described as a "short but violent battle".

8.137 As part of the service, Mr Jenkins gave an ANZAC Day address to a gathering of about 80 people, in what is a spectacular but very evocative setting. Australians and New Zealanders, members of the diplomatic corps, military representatives and Jordanians, among others, attended the moving ceremony.

8.138 The service was followed by a traditional and very well attended ANZAC Day breakfast at the Ambassador's residence.

Other activities

8.139 The delegation was pleased to attend a dinner hosted by HE Abdul A-Majali, Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament and also to attend a reception in its honour at the residence of the Australian Ambassador.

8.140 The delegation was delighted that time was found in it's busy program to make visits to three quite unforgettable sights in Jordan – Petra, The fabled pink city of Indiana Jones repute, Jerash, with its magnificent Roman Ruins and the quite awesome Dead Sea and Mount Nebo.

Outstanding contributions to the bilateral visit

8.141 It is essential that this report records the outstanding contribution made by Dr Hani Al Nawafleh to the success of the visit. Dr Hani and his wife, Attica, are graduates of Monash University and lived and travelled in Australia during that time. No delegation could have wished for a more enthusiastic, pleasant, committed and energetic "honorary host" as Dr Hani.

8.142 If it could, the delegation would have made him an honorary Australian for the outstanding services he provided to it. His willingness to make the visit a success was boundless and as this report attests, he achieved his goal.

8.143 The delegation also highly commends the services provided by the Jordanian Parliament particularly by Mr Yaroub Al Habashney, excellent security officers led by Lieutenant Colonel Amjad Al Husami and Captain Mohamad Al Zubaidi and the efficient transport officers.

8.144 Federal agent Michael Jackson worked tirelessly to co-ordinate security and other arrangements and his contribution was much appreciated.

8.145 The staff of the Australian Embassy in Jordan, particularly Ambassador Trevor Peacock and Deputy Head of Mission, Victoria Young could not have done more to ensure the success of the visit. The program for the visit was wide ranging and well targeted with significant appointments with the Jordanian Prime Minister, the Speaker of the House, President of the Senate and several senior ministers. The delegation also appreciated the time and effort of other Embassy staff, particularly those who organised an excellent and informative program for spouses.

Conclusions

8.146 The delegation expresses its sincere appreciation of the Jordanian Parliament for an outstanding program, incorporating intense discussions on complex and challenging issues facing the Middle East. There is no doubt that Jordan is in the "eye of the storm" of this Middle East process, involving Israel and Palestine and wider issues for the region as a whole.

8.147 The delegation was impressed with and welcomes the moderate and responsible approach adopted by Jordan in what was described rightly as "a hard neighbourhood to live in". The delegation was also mightily impressed with how the Jordanian people are addressing significant domestic challenges including refugees, access to water and lack of energy resources. They are addressing these with enthusiasm, resolve and commitment.

8.148 The visit was highly educative and informative. This was such the case that the delegation considers that Australian parliamentarians, particularly those on the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, should increase engagement with Embassies from the Middle East in order to increase understanding of its history and the dynamics of the complex challenges that impact on the peoples of this troubled part of the world.