



**Report by the New Zealand
delegation to the 124th Inter-
Parliamentary Union Assembly,
Panama City, Panama, and on
the bilateral visit to the Congress
of the United States of Mexico,
Mexico City, Mexico
10–20 April 2011**

Forty-ninth Parliament
Hon Pete Hodgson, delegation leader

Presented to the House of Representatives

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Report by the New Zealand delegation to the 124th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Panama City, Panama, and on the bilateral visit to the Congress of the United States of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico 10–20 April 2011

Bilateral visit to the Congress of the United States of Mexico

New Zealand and the United States of Mexico (referred to in this report as Mexico) first established diplomatic relations 37 years ago. Traditionally focused on trade and cooperation in multilateral forums, the bilateral relationship has broadened significantly in recent years to include a wide range of business, research, political, and people-to-people links. Since the early 1970s Mexico has consistently been New Zealand's top Latin American trading partner and among our most important milk powder markets in the world.

In addition to our trade links, Mexico and New Zealand signed the Mexico-New Zealand Working Holiday Scheme in 2007. This is the first such scheme for Mexico and allows 200 people aged 18–30 from each country to spend up to one year travelling, working and studying in the other country. The scheme began in March 2008 and we were told that the scheme was fully subscribed in the 2009–10 period, and in March this year the available places were filled within a few hours of opening.

Prior to attending the 124th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Panama City, the New Zealand delegation to the assembly made a bilateral visit to the Congress of Mexico. The delegation comprised:

- Hon Pete Hodgson, MP, delegation leader
- Su'a William Sio, MP
- Cath Anyan, delegation secretary.

The delegation was in Mexico from 10–13 April 2011. The programme for the visit is attached as Appendix 1.

Structure of the Congress of Mexico

Mexico has a bicameral parliament consisting of a Chamber of Deputies with 500 directly elected members, and a Senate with 128 directly elected members. Members of the Chamber of Deputies serve three-year terms and members of the Senate serve six-year

terms. A unique feature of the Mexican political system is that no elected official can serve more than one term in office. This applies to all elected officials at the federal, state, and local government levels. We were told that the concept of consecutive re-election is anathema in Mexico because Mexico had a virtual dictatorship for most of the 20th century following the Mexican revolution, and preventing re-election was perceived as a key factor in preventing a President or Government from seizing and refusing to relinquish power.

We were told that elected officials could serve one term, leave office for a term and then stand again but this rarely happens. However, some members are 'cycled' through various positions by their parties, for example standing for Congress, a state governorship, and the Senate in turn.

We understand that there have been attempts to remove the limit on re-election for members of the Congress, and state and local officials, but these attempts have not been successful. At the time of our visit the Senate had approved proposals to remove the limits on re-election but it was unclear whether the Congress would agree to the proposals.

Bilateral meetings

Our first day consisted of meetings with people outside the Congress. Our first meeting was with Mr Alejandro Schtulmann, who is a political analyst working for a private political and security research organisation. Mr Schtulmann gave us an overview of Mexico's political history and current political system, the key issues facing Mexico today, and the current security situation. Mr Schtulmann's very interesting analysis provided a useful background for the rest of our meetings.

We next met with Mr Magdy Martinez-Solimán, Resident Coordinator for the United Nations Development Programme. The United Nations Development Programme is funded by the Mexican Government to administer and participate in various projects relating to good governance, transparency, and reducing poverty. It also monitors and evaluates some government programmes, funds and assists domestic observation of elections, and provides a channel for South-South cooperation.

We had heard that 40% of Mexicans live on less than US\$2 per day and asked Mr Soliman about this. He confirmed the statistic and told us that the reason Mexico's poverty is not even worse is the very high level of remittances from Mexicans living in the United States of America, which comprise 3% of Mexico's gross domestic product. Mr Soliman said that in his opinion conditional welfare programmes will not fix the poverty problem but do help prevent poverty from becoming dire hunger. In his view, employment is the key to alleviating poverty. Mexico's unemployment rate is relatively low at 6%, but the economy is very vulnerable to economic shocks in the United States of America because the Mexican economy is largely modelled around assembling goods for that country. Mr Soliman told us that 70% of Mexico's exports are to the United States of America and Mexico is slow to develop other markets.

Mr Soliman also pointed out that Mexico is still a very young democracy and is developing the good governance required to address some of the challenges it faces.

We had a lunch meeting with Dr Sylvia Ortega, who is the Rector of the National Pedagogical University. Dr Ortega visited New Zealand in 2005 when she was the Under-

Secretary of Education, to look at possible cooperation between the two countries. At that time Dr Ortega considered that Mexico could learn from New Zealand in the areas of primary and secondary education, and teacher training. We had an interesting discussion with Dr Ortega about the education system generally and about teacher training, in which the National Pedagogical University plays a large role.

Our last meeting of the day was with Dr Paul Plascenia Vilanueva, President of the National Human Rights Commission. The Human Rights Commission is an autonomous body with the President being elected by the Senate. It employs 1,500 staff across the country and has a budget of US\$100 million which is voted directly by the Chamber of Deputies. The National Human Rights Commission deals with matters relating to the Federal Government, and each State has its own Commission. Dr Plascenia Vilanueva told us that the Commission deals with around 50,000 cases each year and nearly all are resolved. The main areas of complaint involve justice, women and children, migrants, and prisoners.

Dr Plascenia Vilanueva was at pains to emphasise the autonomy of the Commission and explained that this autonomy is relatively recent. The Commission has been autonomous since a change to the Constitution in 1999 but until recently the President of the Commission was appointed by the President of Mexico. Commissioners are now nominated by the Senate and appointed by a two-thirds vote in the Chamber of Deputies.

Dr Plascenia Vilanueva told us that the Commission has established new institutions and frameworks to increase transparency, and is focusing on training and education to try to bring about a culture change in relation to human rights. In 2010 the Commission trained approximately 200,000 public servants, with the aim of trying to prevent human rights abuses. Dr Plascenia Vilanueva said that the Commission focuses on regions where human rights abuses have occurred, and needs a variety of strategies. He noted that in the last five years there has been an increase in serious breaches of human rights across the board in Mexico.

Our second day of meetings took place at the Congress, and began with a meeting with the Mexico/New Zealand Friendship Group in the Chamber of Deputies. We discussed a number of topics with the Friendship Group including immigration, indigenous issues, budget processes, and education. The group members were interested in our approach to indigenous issues as Mexico faces its own challenges around outcomes for indigenous people. They were also interested in our budget processes and said that Mexico sees New Zealand as leaders in budget processes and the management of public funds.

We asked about the inability to be re-elected and what the reasoning is behind the policy. The members told us that the policy is strongly rooted in history and tradition, and although some attempts have been made to change the policy, none have been successful. The Mexican members found it inconceivable that members could remain in Parliament for years or even decades as some of our members have done.

In the afternoon we met with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the Asia-Pacific, which is chaired by Senator Carlos Jiménez-Macías. Senator Eloy Canto, who is the chair of the Commerce and Industrial Relations Committee, also attended the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting we were told that the meeting, which was broadcast live on

Congress Television, was historic as it would be the last meeting held in the Senate building because the Senate would be moving to a new building the following day.

The meeting focused mainly on trade policy. Both countries put an emphasis on multilateral relationships and Mexico is looking for an increase in its trade partners to balance its reliance on trade with the United States of America. Senator Canto told us that 83% of Mexican imports and exports are with the United States of America, and Mexico's priority is to diversify its trade to reduce the dependency on a single economy. The Mexican senators told us that they think the level of international trade in New Zealand is impressive, and our diversified trade and balance of trade provide good reference points for Mexico.

We took the opportunity to ask the senators for their views on the question of re-election. They told us that the ban on re-election has a big effect on the productivity of members of Congress and that it is effectively a prohibition on advancement for members. The senators said that re-election is desirable as it allows voters to reward or punish elected officials. The Senate is trying to get agreement to make changes to the constitution to allow re-election but it is unclear whether this will succeed.

Our last formal meeting was with officials from the Mexican Customs Department with whom we discussed issues facing the department and their approach to these issues. The officials told us that they have to constantly change their strategies to keep up with illegal imports and drug trafficking, and that they work closely with the Federal Police and military as well as sharing information with other governments. The Mexican Customs Department is also using technology to inspect imports and identify illegal imports or analyse unidentified substances.

124th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

Introduction to the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organisation of parliaments of sovereign states. It is a centre for dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy among legislators representing every political system and all the main political leanings in the world.

Through resolutions and reports, the IPU expresses its views and the positions of the world parliamentary community on issues of international interest, and makes recommendations for parliamentary action. The IPU is developing a closer working relationship with the United Nations system, providing a parliamentary dimension to the United Nations.

One hundred and fifty-seven national parliaments are currently members of the IPU. A list of members is attached as Appendix 2. Nine regional parliamentary assemblies are associate members. Most members are affiliated to one of the six geopolitical groups that are currently active in the IPU.

The IPU is financed mainly by its members out of public funds. Its budget for 2010 totals 18.7 million Swiss Francs (NZ\$23.45m). The New Zealand Parliament's assessed contribution to the IPU budget for 2010 was 66,000 Swiss francs (NZ\$90,541).

While the twice-yearly assemblies are the major focus for New Zealand parliamentarians, the IPU is more than a forum for parliamentary dialogue. The IPU is constantly active in its work to promote democracy throughout the world. Its main areas of activity are:

- representative democracy
- international peace and security
- sustainable development
- human rights and humanitarian law
- women in politics
- education, science, and culture.

Assemblies

The IPU meets twice each year, for a three-day assembly in Geneva in October and a six-to-seven-day assembly immediately prior to Easter, hosted by a member country. The Easter assembly comprises meetings of the following parts of the IPU:

- plenary session of the assembly, attended by all delegates, which has a general debate on a particular theme, debates an emergency item, and holds panel discussions on particular subjects
- Governing Council, which is the policy-making body of the IPU, and consists of two or three delegates from each member country
- ad hoc committees established by the Governing Council
- standing committees, which debate and draft resolutions on chosen topics

- six geopolitical groups.

The agenda of the assembly is attached as Appendix 3.

Our delegation participated in the Governing Council, plenary debate, drafting committee on the emergency item, and meetings of the geopolitical groups of which New Zealand is a member. This report will focus on these events.

The results of the assembly meetings are available at <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/124agnd.htm>.

Governing Council

The Governing Council met twice during the assembly and dealt with the following matters:

- membership of the IPU
- activities of the Executive Committee
- cooperation with the United Nations
- IPU reform
- reports of subsidiary bodies
- finances of the IPU.

Plenary sessions

The plenary sessions were held on five days of the assembly. The agenda for the plenary sessions consisted of the following topics:

- election of the president of the assembly
- general debate on the theme of “parliamentary accountability: living up to people’s expectations”
- selection of emergency item
- adoption of resolutions of the standing committees and on the emergency item
- approval of topics for discussion at the next assembly in October.

Su’a William Sio spoke in the general debate and talked about question time and the select committee process as examples of public accountability and public participation. The text of the speech is attached as Appendix 4.

Emergency item

At each assembly a topic is selected for emergency consideration and a resolution is adopted on the topic. Topics for the emergency item are proposed by member countries,

and if more than one topic is proposed the plenary session adopts one of them by consensus or vote.

New Zealand proposed that the emergency item focus on the situation in Egypt and Tunisia, and how the IPU could assist these countries with their democratic reforms. When we arrived at the assembly we learned that Indonesia and Iran had proposed similar topics, while Pakistan had proposed that the emergency item be about global action to assist Japan as it recovers from the recent earthquake and tsunami.

After some negotiations with Japan, we merged our proposal with those of Indonesia and Iran and submitted a joint proposal. An agreement was reached that the President of the IPU would make a statement supporting Japan in their recovery efforts, and Pakistan would withdraw its proposal for an emergency item. The assembly adopted our joint topic by consensus at the plenary session.

Hon Pete Hodgson participated in the drafting committee for the emergency item and the draft resolution was adopted unanimously by the assembly at the final plenary session. The resolution is attached as Appendix 5.

Standing committees

The IPU has three standing committees, which considered the following topics:

- providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power
- the role of parliaments in ensuring sustainable development through the management of natural resources, agricultural production and demographic change
- transparency and accountability in the funding of political parties and election campaigns.

The three topics were the subject of panel discussions at the assembly in Geneva last October, and these led to reports and draft resolutions that formed the basis for discussion at this assembly.

All three standing committees prepared resolutions that were adopted by the assembly. The resolutions are available at <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/124agnd.htm>.

Geopolitical groups

Most members of the IPU are members of one or more of the six geopolitical groups that operate within the IPU structure. These groups are: Africa, Arab, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia, Latin-America, and the Twelve-Plus. New Zealand belongs to the Asia-Pacific and Twelve-Plus groups. Membership of the groups is attached as Appendix 6.

The geopolitical groups play an important role in the functioning of the IPU. The IPU rules provide that each group can nominate its own candidates for committee vacancies to ensure an equitable geopolitical representation on IPU committees. Each group decides its own working methods to facilitate its participation in the assemblies. The groups meet to

discuss and, as much as possible, agree on a common approach to matters on the agenda, although the groups cannot compel their members to vote in a particular way.

The Asia-Pacific group met once during the assembly and the Twelve-Plus group met on most days of the assembly.

Other activities

At the Easter assemblies the IPU, in conjunction with UNICEF, offers delegates opportunities to take part in field visits focusing on issues relating to children. Su'a William Sio took part in one of these field visits. The group went to a poor community in central Panama City and visited a programme that aims to assist vulnerable children in marginalised communities. The programme uses dance, sport, and graphic design classes to keep children away from gangs and provide a place for them to meet their friends and take part in activities.

Su'a William Sio was shocked and saddened by the 'stark naked' poverty of the community he visited and also by the presence of a large number of heavily armed police that accompanied the delegates for security reasons. The level of poverty and deprivation in the community was such that we would hope never to see in New Zealand.

Appendix 1

Programme for the visit to the Congress of the United States of Mexico

Monday 11 April

- 9.00 – 10.00 Breakfast with Alejandro Schtulmann
Discussion on the Mexican political scene in 2011
- 11.00 – 12.00 Meeting with Magdy Martinez-Solimán, Resident Coordinator, United Nations Development Programme
- 1.00 – 3.00 Lunch with Dr Sylvia Ortega, Rector of National Pedagogical University
- 4.00 – 5.00 Meeting with Dr Raul Plascenia Vilanueva, President, National Human Rights Commission

Tuesday 12 April

- 9.00 – 10.00 Breakfast with group of Congressmen
Hosted by Congressman David Sanchez, Chair of New Zealand Friendship Group in Chamber of Deputies
- 10.00 – 12.00 Meeting with Mexico/New Zealand Friendship Group – chaired by Congressman David Sanchez
Discussion about the NZ political system and transparency in Government
- 12.00 – 12.30 Tour of the Congress
- 2.30 – 3.30 Meeting at Customs Department – José Hugo Germán Martínez, General Administrator of Customs
- 4.30 – 6.00 Meeting with Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Asia-Pacific – chaired by Senator Carlos Jiménez Macías
Discussion on theme of New Zealand, Mexico and the Asia-Pacific
- 8.00 – 10.30 Dinner with New Zealand business representatives and NZTE

Appendix 2

Membership of the IPU (as at 17 May 2011)

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has 157 members and 9 Associate Members.

Member Parliaments

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan

Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi

Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic

Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia

Finland, France

Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau

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

Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique

Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway

Oman

Pakistan, Palau, Palestine, 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, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic

Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey

Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay

Venezuela, Viet Nam

Yemen

Zambia, Zimbabwe

Associate Members

Andean Parliament

Central American Parliament

East African Legislative Assembly

European Parliament

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

Latin American Parliament

Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Transitional Arab Parliament

Appendix 3

Agenda of the 124th IPU Assembly

- Item 1 election of the president and vice-presidents of the assembly
- Item 2 consideration of possible requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the assembly agenda
- Item 3 general debate on the political, economic and social situation in the world with the overall theme of: Parliamentary accountability: living up to people's expectations
- Item 4 providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power (first standing committee on peace and international security)
- Item 5 the role of parliaments in ensuring sustainable development through the management of natural resources, agricultural production and demographic change (second standing committee on sustainable development, finance and trade)
- Item 6 transparency and accountability in the funding of political parties and election campaigns (third standing committee on democracy and human rights)
- Item 7 approval of the subject items for the 126th assembly and appointment of rapporteurs
- Item 8 strengthening democratic reform in emerging democracies, including North Africa and the Middle East

Appendix 4

Speech delivered by Su'a William Sio to the IPU Assembly

Speech at the Inter-Parliamentary Union 124th General Assembly Debate, Panama City

Madam Chair

Let me acknowledge you and everyone here by greeting you in the indigenous languages of the people of New Zealand, as well as the languages used by many people who now call New Zealand their home.

E ngā mana, e ngā iwi, e ngā hau e whā.....Kia ora katoa, Malo e lelei, Fakalofalahi atu, Talofa lava, Ni hao ma, Namaste, Sas-shri-kal, Sha-lom-ala-kum.

May I also extend New Zealand's gratitude to the President & National Assembly of Panama for their welcome of us to their country and for being such gracious hosts to our IPU meeting. May I also through you convey to the representatives of Japan the sympathies and condolences of New Zealand to the people of Japan for their loss in recent tsunami & the nuclear challenges they now face.

Japan like many other nations who came to our aid, have been very kind to NZ in the recent earthquake that hit us in February of this year. I give you New Zealand's solidarity, best wishes and love and may God bless you.

Before I comment on the theme of our debate, I would like to give the General Assembly some context for my remarks on New Zealand's Parliamentary System. Let me begin by asking how many of you know where New Zealand is? How many of you have visited New Zealand? For those of you who do not know, and have not visited New Zealand, we invite you to do so.

We are a small country firmly situated in the Pacific Ocean. From Los Angeles, USA, it will take you about 13 hours of flying, going past Pacific Island countries such as Hawaii, the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji before arriving at the city of Auckland, New Zealand.

We are proud of our mountains, our forests, our four seasons, our rivers, and our clean and green image and it is a challenge trying to protect all this, and maintaining our local environment when the impacts of the rising sea water levels, impacts on our local sea-life, are often not of our doing or in our control.

Our population is a little over 4 million people, although our numbers would probably be a lot bigger if we included the 40 million sheep, cattle and deer that also live on New Zealand.

The languages I used to greet you at the start of my remarks reflect the diverse communities living in New Zealand; there are over 180 different ethnic groups living in Auckland city alone. We have our differences, but nevertheless we strive in accordance with the Kiwi way to be ‘united in our differences’ and to give everyone a fair go.

We have our faults. We are by no means a perfect society. But we are a society that nevertheless stands for good governance. Our people demand it of our politicians. I do want to say that I have never seen violence or killing of our citizens in any of our general or local body elections. In fact I struggle to understand why any nation would shoot or kill its own citizens to hold onto power. The point I make is there is no excuse for violence. Despite having our own history of past wars and violence, New Zealand today has substituted war with playing rugby on the sportsfield, and we relish the opportunity of thrashing Australia, England and South Africa, and hope to do so in the upcoming Rugby World Cup that will be held in New Zealand in September-October of this year.

I now wish to address the theme of this General Assembly debate – parliamentary accountability; living up to people’s expectations. Perhaps there are two distinct features of our Parliament that stand out which are relevant to the theme of this General Assembly.

The first is that the Government is questioned on the spot by the Opposition parties every day for each session of Parliament. The Government is required to answer those questions on the floor. I likened it to the cut and thrust of a sword duel. The public will make their judgement on who asked the best questions, or who answered the questions the best.

Every Minister of Cabinet, including the Prime Minister, is under the gun of parliamentary questions. The Opposition determines which Ministers will answer the question each day. The Government must answer these questions not in long speeches but they must keep it short, sharp and relevant to the question asked. The Government members can also ask their own questions of their Ministers, but these are relatively weak questions – aimed at highlighting their work and profiling their Ministers.

The Public and the media have full access to this duel and they are very unforgiving of Ministers who answer questions badly, or are perceived to be hiding something from the public.

In this Parliamentary term, the Opposition were responsible for two Government Ministers resigning from Parliament – through questioning of Ministers and highlighting allegations of misjudgement and bad behaviour in the House of Representatives.

The second feature of our Parliamentary system, and this is perhaps the most distinctive feature of our Parliament that may be of interest to this General Assembly, is the interchange between Parliamentarians and the public, in particular the calling for and hearing of submissions from the public by a Parliamentary select committee.

In 1979, this legislative process came into effect, meaning that all bills introduced into Parliament are referred to select committees for examination. The exceptions are appropriation bills and bills that are proceeding under urgency. The standard time for consideration of bills by the relevant committee is six months. Changes can be made to this timetable by the will of Parliament. The referral of bills to select committees is to subject the bill to examination and criticism and to invite input from the general public. This allows for a range of views and opinions to be heard.

Committees don’t have to call for submissions but they almost invariably do so by advertising for submissions in the major metropolitan newspapers. The public can give

written submissions on the bill, or request to be heard in person. Time constraints can make the process challenging to hear everyone who wants to be heard, and committees have complete discretion about how to conduct hearings. Submissions are heard in public unless the committee has agreed to hear a person in private or secret. Hearings are generally conducted in Parliament, but committees will travel to other centres if there is a large number of submitters in those centres. Technology is increasingly being used with the public using telephone and videoconferencing to enable people who aren't based in the capital city to be heard by committees. Submitters are today increasingly sending their submissions by email rather than post.

The select committee consideration of a bill and the public's ability to participate in it are regarded as akin to democratic rights. The public input enables a wide range of lay and expert opinion to be brought to bear on the proposed legislation. It can reproduce criticisms advanced by members of Parliament in the course of debate, but is more likely to influence and even be adopted by members for use in that forum. It leads to a critical and almost always constructive examination of the bill, often revealing problems that had been overlooked in preparing it and advancing it as far as the select committee. Most amendments that are made to a bill emerge from select committee consideration. On occasion a bill is completely or substantially rewritten as a result of this consideration.

This select committee process serves a number of useful purposes. For the public it provides the opportunity to:

- engage directly with parliamentarians and influence the decision-making process
- hold the Government to account by examining and criticising the legislative proposals
- become better informed about legislation
- gain some understanding of the MPs' points of view.

For parliamentarians it provides an opportunity to:

- engage directly with constituents and hear their views
- enable a much broader range of viewpoints and opinions to be considered
- discover unforeseen consequences of legislation that would not have otherwise have come to light until the bill was passed into law
- consider possible amendments that might not have been considered
- hear different opinions from departmental advisers, and receive information that otherwise might not have been provided.

Today this select committee process has generated a strong feeling amongst many New Zealanders that people have an inalienable right to appear before a committee.

I hope this is useful information to the General Assembly.

I wish to conclude by referring to a visit some of us took this morning as organised by UNICEF. We visited a Community Cultural Centre called Movimiento Nueva Generacion in the town of El Chorillo. It is a project run by Mr Hector Brands and his team. He works with underprivileged kids. He provides them with positive activities in sports, dance

and computers. It is a very poor part of town. I suspect we all have similar groups and projects in our own countries.

At the end of the day these communities are what this work is about; our people are putting our trust in us to help them. Hector asks that his Government invest in the prevention of violence and invest in the provision of education. I have no doubt that this is a call many communities in each of our countries are asking of us. They ask for simple things such as food on the table, clothes on our back, shelter and a bright and safer future for our children and grandchildren.

The New Zealand experience is that peaceful democracy, accountability and transparency give confidence and freedom to our citizens to achieve these basic things.

That's why if you were to ask me what is the most important thing in this world, I would say, it is people. It is people. It is people. Thank you for listening.

Appendix 5

Resolution on emergency item

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES, INCLUDING IN NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 124th IPU Assembly
(Panama, 20 April 2011)*

The 124th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Noting that the popular uprisings seeking to consolidate democracy that have spread across the Middle East and North Africa are the most prominent social and political development to have taken place in the months leading up to the 124th Assembly,

Affirming the rights of those peoples and countries to determine their own political future, and *recalling* that democracies should reflect a diversity of histories and cultures,

Also affirming that democracies should all be built on recognized norms, standards and principles, including those relating to human rights, equality, including gender equality, transparency and accountability, and respect for plurality of opinion,

Expressing concern for the humanitarian impact of the political changes in the region on vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, and *noting* that 2011 marks the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day,

1. *Affirms* the importance of holding free and fair elections as soon as practicable;
2. *Also affirms* the particular importance of empowering women, including by ensuring their full participation in the democratic process;
3. *Urges* all parties to refrain from violence and ensure in particular that human rights are respected;
4. *Calls on* all governments to respect the right to peaceful self-determination of peoples;
5. *Underscores* the pivotal role the IPU can play in assisting fledgling democracies.

Appendix 6

Membership of geopolitical groups

African Group (41 members)

Algeria, Angola
Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi
Cameroon, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Egypt, Ethiopia
Gabon, Gambia, Ghana
Kenya
Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria
Rwanda
Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan
Togo, Tunisia
Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania
Zambia, Zimbabwe

Arab Group (19 members)

Algeria
Bahrain
Egypt
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mauritania, Morocco
Oman
Palestine
Qatar
Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic
Tunisia
United Arab Emirates
Yemen

Asia-Pacific Group (27 members)

Afghanistan, Australia
Bangladesh
Cambodia, Canada, China
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Japan

Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia, Mongolia
Nepal, New Zealand
Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines
Republic of Korea
Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka
Thailand, Timor-Leste
Viet Nam

Eurasia Group (7 members)

Armenia
Belarus
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan
Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation
Tajikistan

Group of Latin-America and the Caribbean (19 members)

Argentina
Bolivia, Brazil
Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba
Dominican Republic
Ecuador, El Salvador
Guatemala
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama, Paraguay, Peru
Suriname
Uruguay
Venezuela

Twelve-Plus Group (45 members)

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria
Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria
Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland, France
Georgia, Germany, Greece
Hungary
Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy
Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg
Malta, Monaco
Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway
Poland, Portugal
Romania
San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey
United Kingdom

Observers: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, European Parliament

Unaffiliated (4)

Azerbaijan
Maldives, Montenegro
Ukraine