

**International Parliamentarians' Petition 2005 annual report**  
February 2006

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## **A. Introduction: Changing the rules of accountability**

With remarkably little in the way of resources, the International Parliamentarians' Petition has had considerable impact. Launched in the UK in the autumn of 2004, the IPP has received unprecedented parliamentary support in the UK for an initiative of its kind. It has led to an important change in the language of the UK government, a prioritisation of funds for parliamentary capacity building, and focused thinking about increasing parliamentary involvement in bilateral programmes.

With the international launch of the petition in spring 2005, the IPP struck a chord – it represented the first tangible civil society initiative to address the long-held awareness of the importance of parliamentary scrutiny of the IFIs, and a remarkable opportunity for dialogue between progressive parliamentarians and civil society organisations working on the IFIs. Taking parliamentarians to Washington raised the international profile of the issue, but perhaps more importantly, it emboldened returning MPs' efforts to kickstart national initiatives in countries such as Malawi and Indonesia. This served to support the hard work of CSOs in the south building bridges with elected representatives around broader issues of accountability.

The IPP has highlighted how much there is to do. Even in the UK, with high levels of official support, continued pressure is needed to ensure that the rhetoric is translated in to a change in practice. This would be considerably helped along if other donor countries could mount similar campaigns. Most important will be the work in pioneering countries in the south. The work will take many shapes depending on country context, with the IPP being just one of many tools available to help civil society achieve its objectives around democratic accountability of the IFIs. The challenge for us in the year ahead will be to build on the momentum we have generated in 2005, integrating the IPP with related initiatives, and securing the systematic participation of MPs in the initiative.

## **B. Narrative activity report**

### *The Petition*

By the end of 2005, the petition had been signed by over 1100 MPs in 55 countries. It has been translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Swedish, German, and Arabic. It has been endorsed by the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB); UK All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Debt, Aid and Trade, World Government and Overseas Development; the Committee for a Democratic UN; the Committee of the Parliaments of the Americas (COPA); European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA); and numerous civil society organisations and networks.

### *Spring Meetings: Launch of the IPP*

- Parliamentarians from seven countries (Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Malawi and the UK) travelled to Washington to present the IPP, signed by over 1000 parliamentarians in over 50 countries to Ian Goldin, World Bank vice-president for external affairs and Tom Dawson, his counterpart at the IMF.
- The launch put direct pressure on the Bank and Fund to acknowledge that more needs to be done on the issue of democratic oversight of the IMF and World Bank. It has created a concrete process for change at the international

level and opportunities for future actions at national, regional and international levels.

- In the UK in particular, the presence of parliamentarians at the launch has significantly increased the pressure on the UK government to lead on implementing parliamentary oversight of bilateral and multilateral programmes.
- Facilitator Smithu Kothari, professor at Princeton University, concluded the workshop between IPP MPs and Bank/Fund staff and management by drawing out five points:
  - Pursue convergence of work in multiple forums on scrutiny of the IFIs;
  - Recognise the role of other social actors to ensure a deepening of what we understand by democracy;
  - Ensure that there is an open debate on the multiple paths to development;
  - Change the culture of IFI staff, often '*unapproachable and arrogant*', to respect and internalise the democratisation process; and
  - Mainstream the evolving international human rights framework, ensuring that all institutions comply.
- US Congresspersons were interested in the petition and building US support for reform at the Bank and Fund on parliamentary scrutiny.
- Parliamentarians met World Bank Executive Directors from Netherlands, Germany, UK and US to show shareholders that this issue is important. Reaction was supportive, with little concrete initiative however.
- The public debate held at Johns Hopkins University raised the issue of parliamentary scrutiny for international civil society organisations present.
- Over 20 media interviews and newspaper articles raising the profile of the issue across the US and the rest of the world.

#### *Annual Meetings: Building IPP support with southern governments*

- World Bank and IMF Executive Directors' offices representing Indonesia, Ghana, Malawi, Mexico and European countries received the parliamentarians to discuss IPP issues in their specific countries. Executives Directors listened to the cases presented by parliamentarians and were open to learn more about the development of the IPP in these countries.
- Meeting the Progressive Caucus in the US Congress was crucial to get the US more involved in the IPP. Bill Goold, Senior Policy Adviser to the Progressive Caucus, encouraged parliamentarians to be bold and push for getting more support for the IPP issues in the US. Mr. Goold offered to help obtain support from members of the Progressive Caucus and other congress persons.
- The G24 secretariat offered parliamentarians the opportunity to present the IPP at their annual ministerial meeting in Washington.
- Hon Abbie Shawa MP from Malawi told an assembled group of European Executive Directors about the downfalls of the inappropriate use of conditionality where parliamentary scrutiny is insufficient.
- Lastly, the parliamentarians had the opportunity to attend and participate in several other meetings of their interest which took place in Washington during those days. In addition, the Annual Meetings was a good time for parliamentarians to debate key IPP issues between themselves and with IPP representatives.

## *Other IPP activities*

### **Research:**

*Kept in the Dark: A briefing on parliamentary scrutiny of the World Bank and IMF*, by Olivia McDonald, was distributed to numerous conferences, IPP focal points and IPP signatories worldwide.

### **Outreach:**

- Creation of the IPP website [www.ippinfo.org](http://www.ippinfo.org), which catalogues signatories to the petition, provides details on IPP-related events and provides the IPP resource pack.
- IPP resource pack contains an introduction to the IPP, the *Kept in the Dark* briefing, and sample letters.
- Outreach to parliamentary networks
- Meetings with UK MPs, DFID and HMT officials. MP Ann McKechin has agreed to act as an advisor to the IPP.
- Meetings with PNoWB secretariat.
- Meetings with other CSO parliamentary initiatives in Washington in September, to share experience and coordinate efforts.

**IPP secretariat meetings:** monthly throughout 2005

### **Support for national initiatives:**

#### a. Malawi parliamentary coalition on the IFIs (MAPCOI)

With the support of ActionAid Malawi and the Malawi Economic Justice Network, two of the Malawian MPs who travelled to Washington with the IPP contingent, MP Austin Mtukula and MP Ted Kalebe, returned to Malawi to form MAPCOI. A workshop was held in June which attracted 25 members of the Malawian parliament from all political parties. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Enhance the capacity of the legislature to analyse IFI policies;
- Equip MPs with alternative models and skills for budget analysis that facilitates the broadening and deepening of debates.
- Map out the way forward for MAPCOI

#### b. Indonesian bill for parliamentary scrutiny

Indonesian MP Dradjad Wibowo, returned to Indonesia, after attending IPP events in Washington in the spring and autumn, to introduce pioneering legislation requiring parliamentary scrutiny of all IFI loans and grants. The bill is currently awaiting further debate.

#### c. Mexican Senators work on IFI accountability mechanisms

Mexican NGO Equipo Pueblo, under its Citizen Diplomacy Program, fosters the follow-up of IFI policies and projects from a human rights perspective, and citizen participation in IFI decision-making. Equipo Pueblo has built a closer relationship with Mexican Senate on MDB issues, the outcome of which was a proposal to strengthen Senate scrutiny of Mexico's relationship with IFIs. It was also proposed to establish an accountability mechanism to oblige the Minister of Finance to inform senators about all activities and decisions adopted with the IFIs. Equipo Pueblo is

working with senators to finalise the proposed legislation; its formal proposal awaits the outcome of Mexican elections in July 2006.