

**PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI TO OPEN
118th INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY IN CAPE TOWN**

Geneva, 31 March 2008 - No.1

At the invitation of the Parliament of South Africa, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) will hold its 118th Assembly from 13 to 18 April 2008 at *the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC)*. The inaugural ceremony will take place at 7 p.m. on Sunday, 13 April, in the presence of Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa; Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, IPU President; Ms. Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa; Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, IPU Secretary General; and Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General.

Over 1,200 delegates - including some 600 legislators and a record 50 Speakers of parliament from national parliaments around the world¹- and several special guests are expected to attend this event.

The main theme to be debated at the Assembly will be: *Pushing back the frontiers of poverty*. The three IPU Standing Committees will be examining respectively the balance between national security and individual freedoms; State policy on foreign aid; as well as migrant workers, people trafficking, xenophobia and human rights. The full programme of the Assembly is available on the IPU's web page: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/118agnd.htm>.

An emergency item may be added to the agenda, on a topic to be determined on Monday 14 April at 4.30 p.m. Such a request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted. So far, the following proposals have been received: the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the need to accelerate the creation of a Palestinian State to achieve peace in the Middle East; climate change; and the need to reach a humanitarian agreement in Colombia to mitigate the excesses of war and facilitate the conclusion of a peace accord.

Two panel discussions will be held on Wednesday 16 April. The first, scheduled for 9.30 a.m., will discuss maternal, newborn and child health, in the presence of Ms. Graça Machel, world-renowned advocate of women's and children's rights. The second, slated for 2.30 p.m., will address the question of peace building towards reconciliation. Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, who played a critical role in negotiating an end to apartheid and in shaping South Africa's democratic transition, will moderate the discussion. Together with Dr. Frene Ginwala, former Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa, they will present their views on South Africa's inspiring quest for truth and reconciliation. Mr. Yawovi Agboyibo, Member of Parliament and former Prime Minister of Togo, will share his country's experience in promoting political reform and dialogue. Dr. Adekeye Adebajo, Executive Director, Centre for Conflict Resolution, South Africa, will make the closing presentation.

The Meeting of Women Parliamentarians will convene on Sunday, 12 April, from 9.30 a.m. In the afternoon, a debate will be held on the question of women and the media, analysing stereotypes and the image of women in the media. At 1 p.m., a press conference will be held to mark the launch of the IPU survey on *Equality in Politics*, in the presence of Speaker Mbete.

On Saturday 12 April, at 9.30 a.m., Women Speakers of Parliaments will gather for their Fourth Annual Meeting at the invitation of Speaker Mbete. They will discuss the theme of *Combating poverty, investing in women*.

¹ Albania, Algeria, Angola, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Maldives, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

The Cape Town Assembly will also provide an opportunity for delegates to hold bilateral meetings and seek means of resolving conflicts in various parts of the world. The IPU Committee on Middle East Questions will also meet on this occasion. In addition, the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians will continue to examine many cases involving violations of the human rights of parliamentarians in all regions of the world.

Established in 1889 and with its Headquarters in Geneva, the IPU - the oldest multilateral political organization in the world - currently brings together 147 affiliated national parliaments and seven associated regional assemblies. The world organization of parliaments also has an Office in New York, which acts as its Permanent Observer to the United Nations.

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