

IPU 144th Assembly – Country Report

REPORT



144th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Bali, Indonesia

FROM 19TH TO 24TH March, 2022

Attended by:

Hon. Waven William– Head of Delegation

Hon. Audrey Vidot

Miss. Emma Didon

The National Assembly delegation composed of the Members as listed below, submits its Report:

Hon. Waven William
Head of Delegation

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Waven William', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Hon. Audrey Vidot
Member

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Audrey Vidot', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Ms. Emma Didon
IPU Desk Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Emma Didon', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Contents

1.0. Introduction	4
2.0. Pre-commencement of the Assembly – Geopolitical group meetings - 19th March 2022	5
2.1. SADC group meeting.....	5
2.2. All-Africa Group meeting.....	6
3.0. Programme for the 144th IPU Assembly – General debate, meetings, workshops	7
3.1. Meetings of advisers & Secretaries to delegations	7
3.2. Forum of Women Parliamentarians	7
3.3. Inaugural Ceremony.....	9
3.4. Governing Council.....	10
3.5. Standing Committee on Sustainable Development.....	10
3.6. Assembly - Start of the General Debate on the theme Getting to zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on Climate change.....	11
3.7. Pull Aside meeting with Ms. Melati Wijsen	11
3.8. Forum of Young Parliamentarians.....	12
3.9. Assembly - Decision on the emergency item.....	13
3.10. Assembly - Debate on the emergency item and Continuation of the General Debate	14
3.11. Workshop on health security preparedness.....	14
3.12. General Debate - Hon. William’s intervention	14
3.13. Meeting with WHO representatives.....	15
3.14. Standing Committee on Sustainable Development.....	16
3.15. Meeting with Secretary General Chungong.....	16
3.16. Governing Council.....	17
3.17. Panel Discussion – Roles of Parliaments in Accelerating Climate Action Delivery	18
3.18. Meeting with President	19
3.19. Pull-aside meeting with Speaker of Indonesia	20
4.0. Limitations	21
5.0. Recommendations	21

1.0. Introduction

Hon. Waven William - elected member for Grand Anse Mahe and Chairperson of the International Affairs Committee acted as Head of delegation, which consisted of Hon. Audrey Vidot – elected member for Roche Caiman and Ms. Emma Didon, Research Officer/IPU Desk Officer. The proceedings of the General Assembly began officially on the 20th March to last until 24th March. The delegation began attending meetings however, beginning on 19th March, 2022. These were meetings of geopolitical groups such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the all-African group.



Both Hon. William and Hon. Vidot participated actively in the various meetings and activities planned over the course of the four days at the Bali International Convention Centre (BICC). Assisted by the research officer/ IPU desk officer, Ms. Didon, several interventions were made in forums and workshops of which Hon. William, as the Vice Chair of the Standing Committee for Sustainable Development, was invited as panelist in two workshops. Meetings with officials of the IPU and other International Organization were also held.

As a SIDS, it was imperative that Seychelles actively contribute especially on the Theme of the General Debate of the Assembly – ‘Getting to Zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on Climate Change’. The specific concerns and grievances of SIDS were raised and an appeal was made to the member states of the IPU to remain unified on the theme of the general debate.

2.0. Pre-commencement of the Assembly – Geopolitical group meetings - 19th March 2022

2.1. SADC group meeting

The Seychelles delegation began its work at the Assembly on Saturday 19th March 2022 with a meeting of the SADC group. The delegates were briefed on the subjects discussed in the Executive Committee, which were Climate change, vaccine equity and the Ukraine-Russia crisis. The latter took greater precedence in the SADC meeting as the emergency item on the agenda, where there was a mutual urge that the group ‘Speak with one voice’ on the matter. There were issues about the title of the resolution - it was a shared opinion that to speak of peace between the two parties, the IPU would have to apply an impartial and more open approach instead of condemning Russia outright in the title.

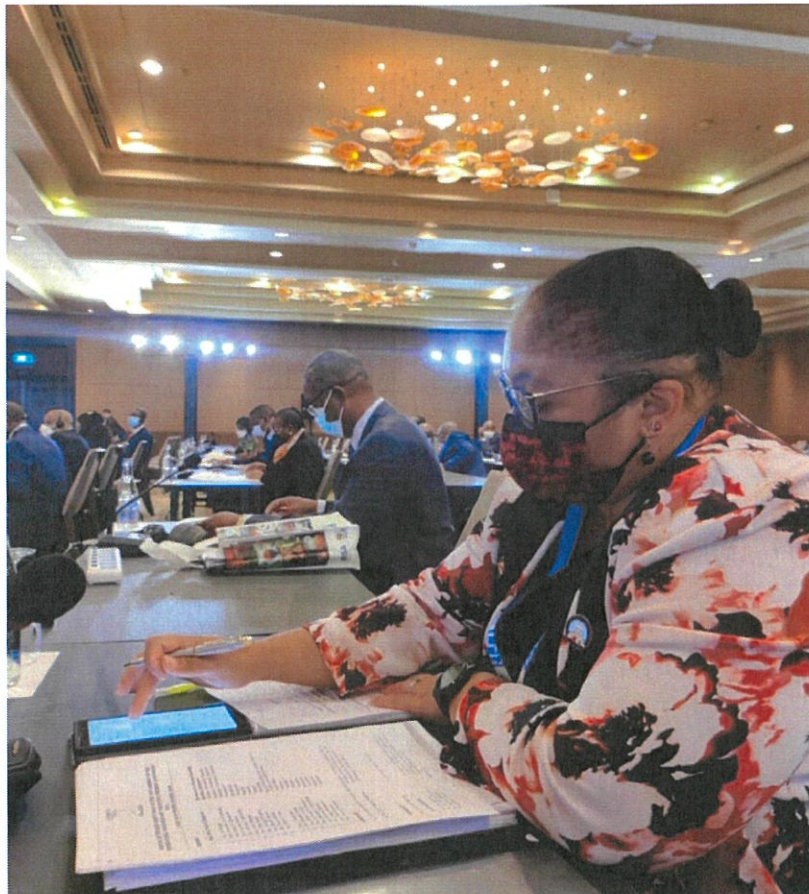


At the SADC meeting, Hon. Waven William also enquired on the level of sensitization of the SADC group on the Glasgow Climate path and the IPU’s political projects. He also suggested that

Africa group consider assessing Africa region parliaments who are in arrears, to better understand their cases and to intercede and encourage them to contribute.

2.2. All-Africa Group meeting

The meeting of the Africa group essentially followed the same format as the SADC group both in its discussions and deliberations. The all-Africa group also agreed that a united stance be established on the matter of the emergency resolution on Ukraine.



Sunday 20th March

3.0. Programme for the 144th IPU Assembly – General debate, meetings, workshops

3.1. Meetings of advisers & Secretaries to delegations

This short meeting, attended by Ms. Didon in her capacity as desk officer of the IPU on Sunday 20th March 2022. The agenda on the meeting was to give an update on the upcoming events, specifically the Inaugural Ceremony due to happen later that evening. Several information and concerns such as transportation to the post-inaugural dinner and the receipt of PCR test results of the delegations meant for the Inaugural Ceremony.

3.2. Forum of Women Parliamentarians

Throughout Sunday 20th March, the Assembly was dominated by the side event - Forum of Women Parliamentarians which highly occupied the Seychelles delegation, particularly, Hon. Audrey Vidot under the theme of ‘*Contributing to the work of the 144th IPU Assembly from a gender perspective*’. On the resolution brought forth by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security titled ‘*Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace*’, Hon. Vidot discussed gender parity within the democratic processes of the world’s parliaments.



She called on the IPU to engage with the United Nations to promote the involvement and recruitment of women in peace negotiations; the need for countries to assess whether they have sufficient legislation in place, adequate mechanisms in advocating on Peace and Security in peace negotiation processes and finally the need to have gender parity representation on peacekeeping missions. She further explained that women have very good negotiating capabilities similar to that of men or arguably better.



The afternoon session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians' focal topic of discussion was *'Parliamentary experiences in promoting women's, children's and adolescent's health in the time of Covid-19 and in recovering from the pandemic'*. Here, Hon Vidot gave a brief outlook on the situation in Seychelles upon the arrival of Covid-19 which included interruptions in the country's health services. Despite the difficulties, Hon Vidot noted and commended the work of the National Assembly's Communicable Disease, HIV-AIDS and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

Committee and the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus in voicing out the concerns of the vulnerable groups they represent. Mention was made on the successful action of the executive on a motion passed by the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus with the support of male MNAs on period poverty. “The executive responded even though motions are not binding to the government. It was the private sector that sponsored and supported the programme through the Ministry of education for our young girls in the school”. With that, sanitary products were made freely available to the female students. She further briefed the meeting on the recent joint SADC - National Assembly of Seychelles’ Women’s Parliamentary Caucus workshop on Gender based violence.

3.3. Inaugural Ceremony

In the evening from 19.30, the delegation attended the Official Opening ceremony of the 144th IPU Assembly where the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Joko Widodo and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mrs Maharani Puan, as the hosts gave a warm welcome to all the members and associate members of the IPU. Together with the IPU President and Secretary-General, gave thoughtful opening speeches were given after which the 144th IPU GA and the General Assembly was officially inaugurated at the Bali International Convention Centre (BICC).



Monday 21st March

3.4. Governing Council

On Monday 21st March, 2022, the day kicked off with the meeting of the Governing Council which Hon. Vidot and Ms. Didon Attended without Hon. William as he was engaged in a meeting of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development of which he is the Vice President. The Governing Council gathered to adopt its agenda for its work over the following days and to approve the summary records of the 208th session of the Governing Council. Delegates in attendance also saw the ‘Consideration of requests relating to IPU membership’ and the President’s reports on the 208th session of the Governing Council and the activities of the Executive Committee.

3.5. Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

At the Sustainable Development meeting, Hon. William in his intervention on the draft resolution entitled ‘*Leveraging Information and Communication Technology as an enabler for the education sector, including in times of pandemic*’ gave a brief report on Seychelles’ educational situation and the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the sector. He highlighted the different actions that Seychelles would have to take which included, a strategy to modernize the education system and making the Ministry of Education a technology-enabled institution.



It was recognized that to achieve this, a multi-sectoral involvement will be needed as well as prioritizing the training of teachers on ICT moving forwards. Hon. William strongly urged that ICT should be an enabler in Education, not just now but beyond the pandemic for generations to come.

3.6. Assembly - Start of the General Debate on the theme Getting to zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on Climate change

Following the Governing Council, the start of the General Debate took place where Hon. Vidot and Ms. Didon heard video messages from Mr. Ban Ki-Moon in his capacity as the Founder of the Ban Ki-Moon Centre for Global Citizens and the current UN Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres. An inspiring keynote address was also delivered by Ms. Melati Wijsen the Leader of the Youthopia Movement, a youth driven NGO in Indonesia fighting for Sustainable practices against Climate Change.

3.7. Pull Aside meeting with Ms. Melati Wijsen

Following her keynote address at the launch of the General Debate, Hon. Vidot and Ms. Didon approached Ms. Wijsen to express their admiration and congratulations on her powerful and inspirational speech. Hon. Vidot and Ms. Didon took this opportunity to commend her on the work she has done in raising awareness against Climate Change as a young leader which includes the campaign to ban plastic in Bali.



Ms. Wijzen was happy to hear that many of our Sustainable initiatives are also driven by youth and was eager to form partnerships and to network with the various entities and NGO's in Seychelles and of which Hon. Vidot and Ms. Didon said they would initiate.

3.8. Forum of Young Parliamentarians

The Young Parliamentarians Forum began that afternoon with Ms. Didon and Hon. Vidot in attendance. Honourable Vidot participated actively in the forum and made three interventions which began with an update on the youth participation in the National Assembly of Seychelles. She informed *“Regrettably only three members of parliament are below the age of 35 years old even though Seychelles Parliament has 37.14% MPs below 45 years old. However, the secretariat of the National Assembly of Seychelles has a strong work force of young people which we are very proud of.”* she stated.



Hon. Vidot went on to further note that the Committees of the Assembly, notably the Media, Youth and Culture committee and the Women's Parliamentary Caucus are engaged and have plans to continue looking at the interest of the youths nationally especially for their wellbeing and the youth's involvement in politics. In addition she recounted the country's success in banning plastics, Styrofoam and balloons in a campaign that started in 2017 due to an active engagement of youth led NGO's.



She also informed the forum of the sustainable and exemplary actions taken by the Secretariat of the National Assembly of Seychelles through its creation of the Environment Policy Implementation Committee (EPIC) which greatly involves both Members and staff to engage in the best green practices. EPIC, boasting an active participation of youth, has most recently planned for the successful adoption of the wetland area around the National Assembly. As a young Member of Parliament, Hon. Vidot concluded her intervention in the forum by providing her perspective on the topic of *‘Leveraging Information and Communication Technology as an enabler for the education sector, including in times of pandemic’*. She put much emphasis on the challenges faced by parents and teachers from the onset of the pandemic and of coping with long distance learning. A lack of resources was amongst the most striking immediate challenges. She noted that there should be a gradual transition from traditional learning in the country towards the use of new and modern technology especially as youths are already more adept with New and modern technology.

3.9. Assembly - Decision on the emergency item

The plenary debate of the afternoon focused on two propositions of the emergency item; the Ukraine war. Proposals were presented by Indonesia and New Zealand. Hon William remained in the Assembly to hear the debate and stances of the different delegations and voted for the proposal

brought forth by New Zealand – ‘Peaceful resolution of the war in Ukraine, respecting international law, the Charter of the United Nations and territorial integrity’.

Tuesday 22nd March

3.10. Assembly - Debate on the emergency item and Continuation of the General Debate

The fourth day of Tuesday 22nd March, 2022 began with the complete delegation attending the continuation of debate on the emergency item which was followed by the General debate of which Hon. William was unable to attend as he was invited to participate in a ‘Workshop on health security preparedness’ as a panelist co-sponsored by World Health Organization and the Interparliamentary Union

3.11. Workshop on health security preparedness

At the workshop, Hon. William gave a short report on Seychelles’ response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the current situation. He made note that over 70% of the population was already vaccinated and expressed his gratitude to the Seychelles’ bilateral and multilateral partners without which this would not have been possible, and more lives would have been lost.

3.12. General Debate - Hon. William’s intervention

At the General Debate of ‘Getting to zero’, Hon. William made a powerful intervention. He started off by stating that not enough is being done to curb the negative actions fueling Climate Change. He highlighted Seychelles’ vulnerability as a SIDS and called on the international community not to forget the unjust negative impacts on the small island developing states as they move on with their development agenda. Hon. William called out for a more unified and harmonized approach in the oversight roles and legislations of IPU member states for a more national and global scrutiny of actions. Getting to zero is not an impossible task but requires he said a more common and comprehensive global effort. He concluded with a reflection “I leave you with this reflection: All is possible common and comprehensive in decision making and action. At the end of the day, are

they all beneficial and are they constructive to the betterment of Humanity or missing the balancing act for precision?''.



3.13. Meeting with WHO representatives

The Seychelles delegation, in the afternoon, had a bilateral meeting with the representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO). The meeting was short and rich, where discussions focused on the enforcement of the oversight role of parliamentarians. The WHO wanted our views on whether the International Health Regulations (IHR) should be ratified for to facilitate country national domestication into appropriate health related laws. Ensuring the strengthening of our health system and preparedness in times of pandemics.



The delegation was also advised to have a meeting with the WHO representative in Seychelles to be apprised more on the cooperation.

3.14. Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

The meetings of the Sustainable Development Committee continued where this time the discussions centred on the subject items of the next resolutions which are scheduled for adoption at the 146th IPU Assembly. The proposed resolutions were ‘Reconnecting local communities with a local sustainable inclusive economy to achieve the target of SDG 8’ and ‘Parliamentary efforts in achieving negative carbon balances of forests’ where the Committee voted to select the latter resolution. Hon. William also lent his support to the resolution expressing that he is for the achievement of all SDGs in line with Agenda 2030 especially in terms of countries’ socio-economic development. The former resolution addressing SDG 8 will be adopted as a panel discussion topic at the 146th Assembly.

3.15. Meeting with Secretary General Chungong

The day continued with a bilateral meeting with the Secretary General of the IPU, Mr. Martin Chungong. Hon William raised the IPU’s SIDS member concerns such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the small island economies which includes the high cost of living as well as the recent impacts caused by the Ukrainian armed conflict.



Hon. William gauged the views of Secretary-General Chungong on the matter of SIDS rep to attend the chairperson meetings of the geopolitical forum., noting that the element of Inclusivity is very important to better understand the outcry and concerns. They both agreed that further thought and reflection by the other decision-making bodies within the IPU would be needed on the matter moving forward.



S.G Chungong commended Seychelles for its active involvement in IPU and was eager to identify what more our island state could do. He was presented with tokens from the National Assembly at the end of the meeting.

Thursday 24th March

3.16. Governing Council

The Seychelles delegation attended the last Governing Council meeting in the morning of the 24th March. The delegations were able to hear the ‘Reports of specialized group meetings’ from the Council’s agenda.

3.17. Panel Discussion – Roles of Parliaments in Accelerating Climate Action Delivery

The delegation later took part in a side event, where Hon. William represented IPU as a panelist. The workshop was co-hosted by the WFD (Westminster Foundation for Democracy) titled ‘Roles of Parliaments in Accelerating Climate Action Delivery’. The panelists gave examples of best practices adopted by their respective parliaments that other countries could also adopt. The participants were eager to participate and learn from the panel of parliamentarians.



Hon. William spoke of the goals and commitment of the IPU towards strengthening IPU members of parliament in their oversight roles against Climate Change. He outlined what past events such as parliamentary virtual workshops, the various declarations and communiques drawn up and parliamentary capacity building events held regionally. Hon Vidot contributed to the debate with positive steps the parliament of Seychelles is taking to lead by example, to reduce emissions such as the installation of rooftop solar panels and rain water harvesting amongst other actions. Certain positive steps taken by the government in areas of mitigation and adaptation were highlighted.

3.18. Meeting with President

The delegation also had a last minute meeting with the president of IPU, Mr. Duarte Pacheco. Hon. William raised the issue of IPU regional meetings that the President himself had previously suggested that Seychelles consider to co-host. He requested for a checklist of the requirements and ideas of regional subject matters. He expressed concern of the poor participation of SIDS from the Pacific region and wanted IPU to look into the matter. They also discussed the harmonization of best practices within the organization that will allow the member states to be on par with international norms and the best practices of accountability and good governance.



Hon William accepted to present a report on what the parliament of Seychelles is doing in line with the principles and values of IPU. At the end of the meeting, gifts were exchanged.

3.19. Pull-aside meeting with Speaker of Indonesia



The Seychelles delegation also had a brief pull-aside with the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Indonesia, Mrs. Maharani Puan. Hon. William took this opportunity to congratulate her for the remarkable efforts placed by her government and parliament for the successful implementation of the 144th IPU General Assembly. He also expressed the wish for bilateral parliamentary cooperation between Seychelles and Indonesia’s Parliaments. Both sides presented gifts to each other.

4.0. Limitations

Meetings with other SIDS, Mauritius in particular did not materialise due to diverging time schedules and the amount of workload of the delegations.

5.0. Recommendations

The following recommendations are commitments that the IPU NAS desk officer has to initiate on behalf of the 144th IPU Assembly delegation and to present to the IAC (International Affairs Committee)

- Seychelles Networking with Youthopia
- IPU delegates and IAC meeting with the Seychelles' WHO representative.
- Meet with the Minister for agriculture, environment, energy, climate change and blue economy
- Meet with NAS' SADC- PF desk officer
- NAS engage with Ministry of Education, youth department and UniSey on political affairs
- Secure the Speaker's approval to host the IPU regional meeting

