

## **MR. THEO-BEN GURIRAB ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE IPU**

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The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) today elected a new President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia, to replace the outgoing President, Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini of Italy.

Mr. Gurirab, who will serve a three-year term of office, was Namibia's Prime Minister from 2002 to 2005 and Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1990 to 2000. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly Constitution Drafting Committee and a founding member of parliament. In 1999, he served as President of the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. He was instrumental in driving the UN reform process and presided over the drafting of the historic United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000.

### **Palestine admitted as a Member of the IPU**

In a groundbreaking decision, the IPU also admitted the Parliament of Palestine as a full-fledged Member.

### **Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians**

The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, for its part, wound up three days of meetings with a report in which its President, Canadian Senator Sharon Carstairs, noted the growing number of cases of parliamentarians who are forced to flee their countries in fear of their lives and the safety of their families and who turn to the Committee for assistance in their quests for asylum abroad.

During its session in Geneva, the Committee examined 63 cases concerning legislators in 33 countries, among them public cases in: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Lebanon, Mongolia, Myanmar, Palestine/Israel, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

*Established in 1889 and with Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the IPU - the oldest multilateral political organization in the world - brings together 154 affiliated national parliaments and eight 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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