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**Overview of comparative study on how parliaments are working to integrate
the MDGs in their institutional mechanisms and political agendas**

Honourable Ms. Chairperson,
Honourable Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and a honour for me to be with you and working with you on the AIPA Seminar here in Phnom Penh, the capital of the kingdom of Cambodia.

First I would like to introduce myself.

My name is Annemarie Frage-Münch. Don't try to pronounce this complicated German name. But I would like to tell you that my surname "Frage-Münch" is a combination of two surnames, a so-called double-name. The first is my maiden name and the second is the surname of my husband. So you see a woman who has realized gender equality already in the name.

I studied law and in my professional carrier in one of my jobs I was a women' representative. With regard to these experiencies I was invited by the National Assembly to train the staff in topics of international women's rights and international women affairs. I was also invited to attend this AIPA Seminar.

I am working as a volunteer for the Senior Expert Service in Germany. This is a foundation of the German economy. Private or public organisations can request experts for an assignment when help and special knowledge is needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

My task is to give you an overview about how parliaments are working to integrate the MDGs in their institutional mechanisms and political agendas. But how to find out

the various experiences Members of Parliaments (MPs) have made with the MDGs in the Parliaments of the world? Luckily, in 2010 an analytical study about this topic was issued.

This study reports the parliamentary mechanisms for MDGs. It was initiated and organised by the IPU, the Inter-Parliamentary Union in collaboration with the UN Millennium Campaign. The IPU is one of the main supporters of the UN campaign. The study is part of the so-called “We can END POVERTY 2015 Campaign”. So I can tell you some practical examples how parliaments work in supporting the MDGs.

And perhaps you can add some experiences from your own country in the following discussion.

Now let's go to the study itself.

This report seeks to examine the internal mechanisms of parliaments related to work on the MDGs. It is based on investigations in seven countries: in Italy, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya and Nigeria.

First of all we have to explain the concept of parliamentary mechanisms.

A parliamentary mechanism is understood as any form of parliamentary body. This can take the form of a parliamentary committee, a task force or a working group. Parliaments organise themselves in different ways. It is common for parliaments to have committees according to the competences of the Ministries, like a budget committee or an education committee, health committee and so on (portfolio committees). These will be defined in the standing orders of each parliament. The same rules will also define the other types of mechanisms allowed. In some parliaments the portfolio committees can create subcommittees, and some parliaments permit the creation of working groups. Parliamentary committees have extensive powers, explicitly granted to them in the legislature's standing orders and often also in the constitution.

There are also a variety of parliamentary mechanisms established by specific procedures.

In Italy, the Chamber of Deputies constitutes a subcommittee on the MDGs within in the Committee of Foreign affairs. In Kenya, a parliamentary working group on MDGs has been formed. In Nigeria, a standing committee fully dedicated to MDG issues was created. The Indian parliament has an informal group on MDGs, and in Indonesia, a parliamentary task force on MDGs has been established. South Africa and Mozambique have not established any particular parliamentary mechanisms to deal with MDG work.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The seven countries included in the IPU study have adopted different mechanisms on how to work relating to the MDGs. You as MPs need to consult the standing orders of your parliament and your constitution to have a more complete picture of how the parliamentary committee system or other types of mechanisms operate. Parliamentary rules determine to a large extent the way parliaments work and what options exist for their work in the future.

In regard of the MDGs the main problem is: Does it need a particular MDG structure to achieve a better support of the MDGs?

Let us now throw a glance at the parliamentary working with the MDGs in three of the seven countries.

First: Italy

Italy is one of the donor countries. In this regard we speak about achieving the MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development. The target is that the developed countries are committed to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GDP) for development assistance.

Like other nations Italy adopted the UN Millennium Goals as guidelines for its development cooperation policy.

Italy's parliament has been united in a political effort to demand that its government respects the country's financial commitment to the MDGs. Although the creation of the Subcommittee for MDGs shows the Italian Parliaments's interest in cooperation

issues, a persistent problem is cuts in cooperation budget funds. Actually, Italy is very far from reaching the minimum input of 0.7 per cent GDP established for 2015.

Second: Kenya

In 2009, the Kenyan parliament established the Parliamentary Caucus on Poverty and MDGs.

The Caucus is composed of 18 members of parliament. The Caucus' task is to oversee the achievements of the MDGs by improving government accountability for policy formulation and implementation. The caucus does not enjoy the status of a standing committee; it is an informal group approved by all parties and by the leadership of the house. The caucus draws in MPs from all portfolio committees related to MDG work and aims to coordinate and uphold parliament's role in achieving the MDGs.

The caucus intends to reinforce the role of parliamentarians in holding the government accountable for its commitments to and progress on achieving the MDGs.

The caucus also hopes to build MPs understanding of the MDGs and to encourage them to force the government to deliver on the MDGs by 2015, as well as to advocate for the mainstreaming of the MDGs in local and national development plans and budgets.

Parliamentary institutions like the MDG Caucus are critical in ensuring that the executive branch of government stays focused on achieving the MDGs. To play this role more effectively, the Caucus should regularly engage directly with the population through grassroots-based networks like farmers' and womens' groups to obtain a realistic perspective on the work required to achieve the MDGs.

Third: India

In the Indian Parliament, there is no specific institutional structure such as a committee that monitors achievement of the MDGs. The progress towards the MDG targets is regularly monitored by the relevant standing committees on human

resource development, urban and rural development, water resources, social justice and empowerment.

In 2008, a group of parliamentarians brought together the Parliamentarian's Group on the MDGs – PG-MDGs. The group which started with 20 members of Parliament issued a joint statement on achieving the MDGs.

The PG-MDG seeks to perform specific functions in each session of Parliament by way of raising questions, using parliamentary instruments to initiate debates and organising regular interactions with civil society organisations on issues of topical importance.

The 2009 MDG report shows that in 6 of the indicators the country is on track. But in the indicator on halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger the country seems to be off track.

Conclusions:

At the end of this study you have to ask yourself: Should a parliament have a particular mechanism for MDGs?

It is up to each parliament to reflect on its committee system and rules and – based in its circumstances like political situation, development level, party system or parliamentary resources – to reflect on whether or not there is a need for a group or specialised committee on the MDGs. However there are some observations that may help:

- A parliamentary group on MDGs can help to increase awareness of the MDGs among MPs
- In all countries, even those where there is an MDG structure, the portfolio committees, for example: health, education, budget play a crucial role. Any program to strengthen the role of parliaments with regard to the MDGs needs to include these committees

- MDG structures work as an entrance point for civil society organisations and multilateral agencies that want to work with the parliament on the MDGs
- Parliamentary structures do need sufficient resources to be able to perform their role. This applies also to any parliamentary mechanism that is implemented in supporting the MDGs.

Let's come to a last observation:

In all countries the MDGs were integrated into the national documents on development presented to the parliament.

A less positive finding is that the country MDG reports have not been discussed in these parliaments. The mutual international accountability of the MDGs is definitely a plus point. But before reaching the international arena, there should be a national debate about the facts if the goals of the MDGs in your own country have been achieved or not and what are the reasons.

There is only one institution where this is possible – parliament. An MDG report or national commitments to the MDGs could be an opportunity to enhance the inclusiveness of the process and therefore, not doing so could be a missed opportunity.

At the end of my speech I would like to add some personal remarks on the role of women in the democratic process and development.

The history shows and also for my own opinion women are the driver in developing more and better democratic structures – provided they don't act as a part of a undemocratic and/or corrupt system.

Remembering the history of the International Women's Day – we celebrated the 100s birthday three days ago – women had to fight for their own human rights –at first for example for the right to vote, men had achieved more than 100 years ago – with spectacular and unusual actions.

This kind of battle hasn't changed till today.

In the course of the last century women had to fight for their equality rights despite of the fact that the equality of men and women had been determined in the constitutions.

The implementation of the written right into the real life of women and the battle against any kind of discrimination of women is always combined with a permanent struggle against social traditions, comfortable conduct in the daily life or convictions on the reason of religion or other issues.

The challenge to overcome the unequal conditions is the special demand of every woman. If women will not fight for their own rights – and that means in regard of the topic of this seminar to fight for the improvement of the conditions for young girls, pregnant women, mothers and their childs – the situation in the whole society will not change. It depends on the commitment of all women and especially of you as the representatives of women in the parliaments to change the state of affairs into better living conditions – in doubt against the resistance of your male colleagues or traditional opinions in the society. The empowerment of women is the key in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.